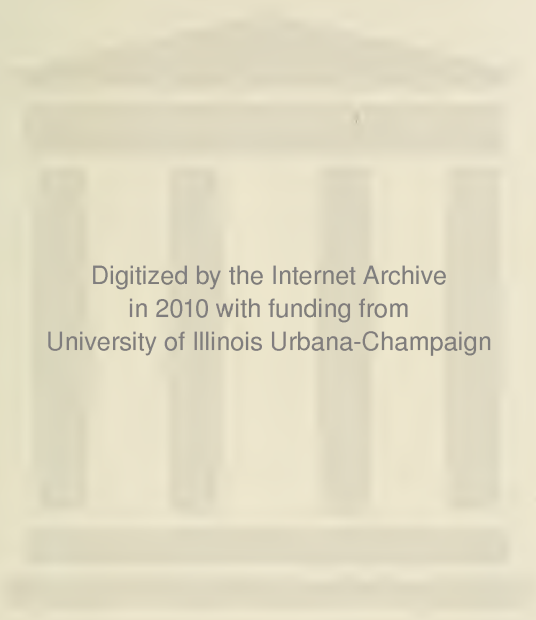


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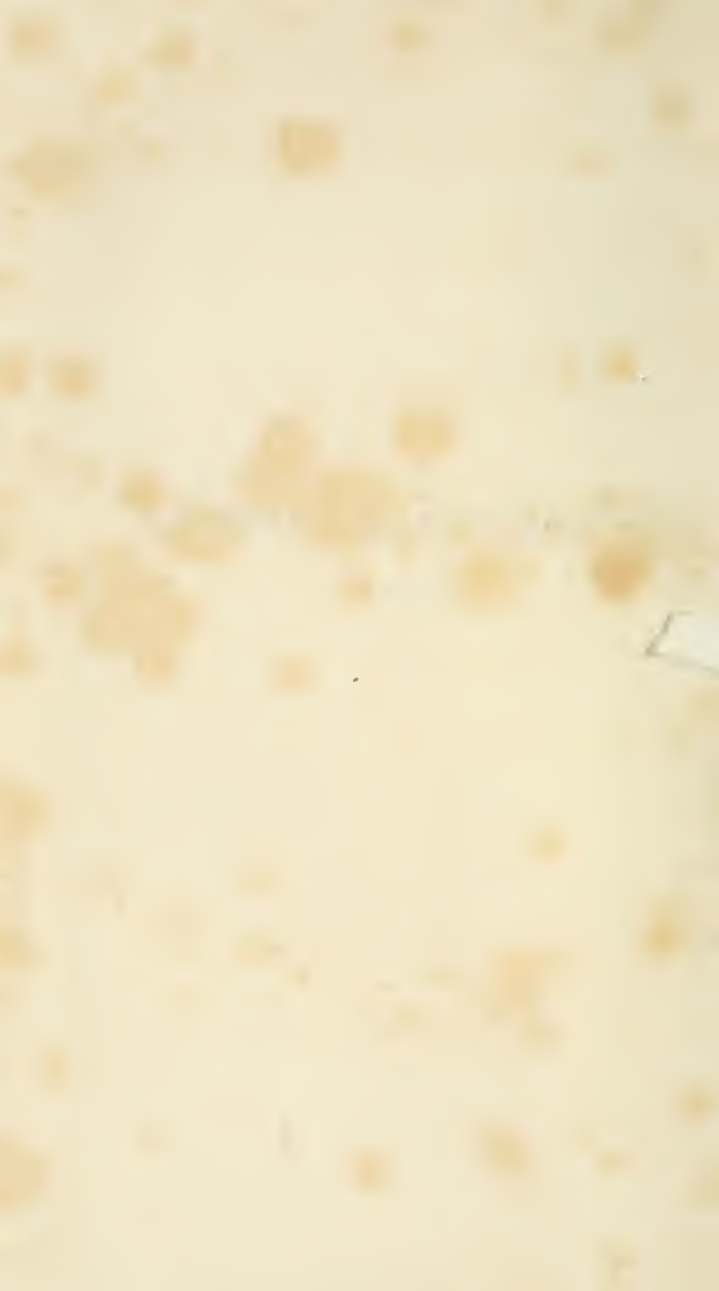


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SIR RODOLPH OF HAPSBURG.

VOL. I.



SIR RODOLPH OF HAPSBURG.

AN

HISTORICAL ROMANCE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL I.

LONDON :

M. ILEY, SOMERSET STREET, PORTMAN SQUARE;
AND BELL AND BRADFUTE, EDINBURGH.

MDCCCXXXIV.

W. Davy, Printer, Gilbert-street, Grosvenor-square,

SIR RODOLPH OF HAPSBURG.

CHAPTER I.

IT was on a cold day of March, that two Travellers urged their weary way, over the snow clad country, which extends, from where the majestic Rhine rolls its rapid flood, to the immediate vicinity of the broad lands of Greiffen; and though evening approached, yet as the summit of the gloomy woods, composed of fir and larch, still glowed in the golden rays of the setting sun, and the moist shrubs glittered as if strewed with little rosy sparks, they confidently hoped to reach the dwelling of Leonhardt, where they might obtain food, and shelter from the inclemency

of the weather. Night, with her sable mantle, still found them pressing eagerly forwards, with merry hearts; but now a colder wind arising, and the sky becoming obscured with murky clouds, and the snow again beginning to fall heavily, rendered the path more intricate: the youngest of the travellers dismounted, and throwing the rein of his horse to his companion, occasionally tried the ground with his spear, to avoid falling into concealed pits and hollows. The youth was formed in nature's strongest mould, and there was a dignity in his figure and demeanour, and an elegance and richness in his armour and dress, which indicated gentle birth, whilst the garb of his companion was that of a man at arms. The storm subsided at length, the heavy clouds passed away, and the moon arose, shedding a faint light; but after wading through deep snow, Hugo became bewildered in the maze, and turning to his companion, said, "I fear we have mistaken

our road, Charles; we ought, agreeably to our directions, to have reached our night's quarters ere this."

"I have long thought so," replied Charles, "we should have kept more to the left, after crossing that old rotten bridge, the curse of St. Martin light on them for not repairing it, for it is not from want of wood: if we have any luck, we shall end our journey in that gloomy forest yonder."

The youth laughed and replied, "You are certainly a great comforter in the hour of distress, and if I had not often proved your ingenuity in forming expedients in greater difficulties than this, I should be almost as gloomy myself, but we shall forget our fatigues under the warm roof of Leonhardt, which cannot be far distant."

"Ah! youth is always sanguine," replied Charles, "but when you have lived long enough to obtain my experience, you will not look so frequently on the bright side of a picture; in my humble opinion, we

are more likely to find rest in some ditch ; for the inhabitants, more savage than wild beasts, and accustomed to scenes of blood from their infancy, will not keep their swords sheathed, when an attack on us, (glancing his eye at his companion's dress,) promises them such a golden harvest."

" Thou art like a raven, Charles, with this difference; that the one croaks from a tree, the other from a horse—and both are false prophets. Dost thou not see the expected beacon? yon vast and gnarled oak, which relying on its own strength, stands proudly alone, the monarch of the forest, whilst his weaker subjects cling together for support, from the fury of the winter's storm: if the light but serves us, we may surely rely on reaching our quarters, ere the expiration of half an hour, for our last informant stated, that, the old tower was not more than a quarter of a mile from this conspicuous object."

" I hope," replied Charles, " the traveller has not imposed on our credulity, and led

us into this cursed black wood, for some sinister purpose:—hark! how the storm whistles again amongst the branches, and the thunder rolling in fearful and lengthened peals, re-echoes through the mountains.”

They had now entered a dark and wild track of hilly country, and as the passing clouds obscured the moon, the stars faintly twinkling through the black pine branches, scarce pierced the gloom, and only rendered darkness more visible—when Hugo losing all trace of a path, exclaimed, “I think Charles we may bid adieu to good quarters for this night, and may as well secure our horses;—the present spot seems most favourable for this object, as it is well protected from the wind, and the snow has drifted away.”

Charles, whose stalwart form and sun burnt visage declared that he had often endured the winter’s cold and summer’s heat, in many a long campaign, selected an eligible spot for the horses, and soon

collected a good litter of fern and other vegetable substances, which the prevailing March winds had perfectly dried; and turning to his master, proposed that they should put in practice what their military experience had taught them, and erect a hut as a shelter against the cutting winds. "By all means!" replied Hugo, "and we may yet contrive to render our situation agreeable, with the scanty provision we have fortunately brought with us." Master and man now cut several stakes, and forming a frame with a slope at top, began to twine the slender pine branches between, when suddenly, sounds of merriment struck upon their startled ears with inexpressible sweetness; all was silent again, scarce a breath of air stirred, only a few soft tones faintly sounded like a dying echo; the effect was exhilarating to the heart of Hugo, but Charles was plunged into serious alarm, and stoutly declared, that the voices were unearthly, and clearly announced approaching mis-

fortune. At this period, the lower and middling orders were degraded by the grossest superstition; for the clergy, like the heathen priests of old, whose power was founded on the ignorance of the people, to preserve their own influence, veiled the truth in darkness, and fettered their imaginations in the web of mystery; hence those lying chronicles and fabulous legends, which destroyed the principles of religion, and plunged the world into error. The sounds being repeated, Hugo, assuming fresh courage, ordered Charles to follow immediately with the horses, declaring that he would soon convince him, that the light and merry laugh proceeded from something more substantial than a spirit; and ascending the hill, had scarce advanced a few paces, when a bright ray of light glanced towards him, and served as a direction to a solitary tower—where he knocked at the door repeatedly, but no person answered his demands of admission, although he distinctly heard the

cheerful voices of those within: at length he observed a head peeping over the battlements, as if to reconnoitre, and presently after the door was slowly unbarred, and Leonhardt invited the stranger to enter. "You are just in time for supper my worthy friend; I did not recognize you at first; the soup is served, and will revive your benumbed limbs, and restore your strength: but stay, I perceive your horses are approaching, I will open the stable for their reception." Every thing being properly arranged for the comfort of their chargers, the party entered the tower, and sat down to table; "But have you no meat, mine host of the forest?" demanded Hugo.

"Thousand devils, how should we procure it here!" replied Leonhardt.

"Do you then live on vegetable diet?"

"Yes," mournfully replied Leonhardt, "we endeavour to keep body and soul together with this watery food."

"Then by my troth you succeed admi-

rably well, for a pair of healthier, or sleeker personages than your wife and yourself, I never beheld." Leonhardt grinned, and displayed such a set of noble grinders, that Hugo declared, such formidable instruments were not made for merely crunching vegetable matter, and must occasionally be employed in food of a more substantial nature.

Leonhardt replied, "that they were good Catholics, and that he might easily observe by their famished appearance, that they implicitly followed the strict regimen of their church."

"That I can easily believe," replied Hugo, "but it is the penance of swallowing good venison."

"Mention not this dangerous name, most noble squire, walls have ears; consider the severity of the forest laws, if you regard not our religious scruples."

"To the first objection," replied Hugo, "we shall all share in the offence, and will therefore naturally conceal our delin-

quencies, and if you will not treat a friend with hospitality and confidence, here is absolution for the second," shewing his purse of gold. Mine hosts eyes glistened with delight, and retiring into a back apartment, he opened a small trap door, and descending, soon reappeared with a fine stew of venison, which had been carried off on hearing the noise, and was now devoured with great relish by the half-famished guests. Hugo again addressed the worthy host, who seemed to have quieted his conscience with a tolerable good supply of the forbidden meat.

"I should imagine, by the rich colour of your nose, that your lips did not always enjoy the taste of water?"

"You speak truth, my good friend, we have some excellent beer."

"I should think that it would require something stronger, to produce that purple hue on your cheeks—methinks another dive through the trap door, and you would not come up empty handed."

Mine host laughed, and said, "I will make the vain effort; but presently returned, declaring, that he had purchased a few bottles of cherry water for his wife, as she always appeared faint after any great exertion, having become a poor weakly creature in consequence of her long penances."

"I should imagine this generally happens after meals," replied Hugo, "and it does not surprise me, for the wondrous dexterity and activity she has displayed in demolishing the noble stew, is enough to produce langour and fatigue, at least in the jaws, for they are only calculated to bear a certain portion of labour, and that they have certainly undergone this blessed evening." The wine proved excellent, and this sickly personage, who was as plump as a partridge, repeatedly swallowed long and heavy draughts of the spiced wine, and other beverages peculiar to the country, before she recovered her faintness, and did ample justice to the ex-

cellent choice of her husband, whilst Hugo and Charles forgot the dreariness and gloom of their late journey, and imitated her good example. The party soon became joyous, and their hearts dilated as their skins became filled with generous cheer: tales of chivalrous deeds, of ghosts and goblins, succeeded each other in rapid succession, for the neighbourhood was rich in legendary lore, and the love of mystery and superstition reigned in that dark period with despotic sway in Germany, and was strongly characteristic of the times; for Protestantism had not yet diffused the light of knowledge, and freed the mind from the heavy shackles which bound it in ignorance and gloom. As the spirits of the happy party became more warmed, former recollections were revived, and friendly feelings aroused; but it is time that we should give some information regarding the occupation of the worthy entertainer.

Anthony Leonhardt had long resided

in the castle of Sir Lutold of Regensburg, as one of his most devoted and trusty retainers; remarkable for his great bodily strength, and excelling in all the manly feats so much practised at that turbulent period. He had repeatedly signalized himself in the continual conflicts between the neighbouring chieftains, and had consequently attracted the attention, and won the esteem of his master—himself no mean judge of valour in another, and ever ready to reward with liberal hand the attachment of his followers: an opportunity soon offered of shewing his sense of Leonhardt's merits, and on the death of George Links the Forrester, he immediately appointed him to the vacant situation, which proved very lucrative, as he kept a house of entertainment for Travellers, although he was cautious of admitting armed strangers, particularly during the night; he was also permitted to slay a certain number of deer every year; but it so happened, that the new Forrester was either a bad arithmeti-

cian, or was blessed with a treacherous memory, since the number slain, rather agreed with his own, and his friends' wants, than with his lord's orders. It may appear extraordinary, that Sir Lutold should so readily part with one of such approved valour and fidelity; but he was too shrewd a calculator to forego present advantage without an excellent equivalent, and he expected to derive greater services from his retainer in his present situation, than when stationed about his person; besides he had still the power of recalling him to his standard on any great emergency. Placed in a central situation, on an important commercial route, and daily in the habit of receiving visitors of all descriptions, Leonhardt, an intelligent and shrewd man, had frequent opportunities of collecting information of considerable importance to his feudal lord; for generous wine is apt to unlock the secrets of the closest bosom, and to lull caution to sleep; and in the moments of strong excitement, when all

was joy around, and the hearts of his guests expanded with social sympathies, expressions frequently escaped their lips, which gave a clue to many a dark deed, and enabled the crafty baron to unravel the thread of deceit. Cheerful in disposition, and contemplating with pleasure the happiness of his fellow beings, Leonhardt, though he joined their social parties, had sufficient prudence to observe moderation in his cups, and was thus enabled to collect his information unsuspected by the parties themselves. It is not to be supposed, that all the trifling news obtained in this manner was constantly imparted to Sir Lutold; the one was too proud to listen to matters of minor import, and the other too honest to betray the secrets of individuals, provided they did not militate against the safety of his lord; indeed, on any occasion where implicit confidence was placed, his honour might be relied on; although a retainer of Sir Lutold, yet he was protected by the other chieftains, as

his house being so conveniently situated, afforded refreshment to their parties, on their frequent excursions. The delicate lady, of whom mention has already been made, had been the abigail of the late Countess of Regensberg, and after her death, had rewarded the long attachment of her present husband with her fair hand, long previous to the occasson of his new appointment; their union had been blessed with an only son, who was absent on business relating to his lord. Hugo had been attached to the suite of the late Count of Montfort, but was now proceeding to offer his services to Sir Herman Greiffen, whom he had frequently seen at the Castle of Montfort. Born in a superior station of life, he had early received an excellent education, and was well read in all those wild phantasms of the Rhine, which still afford such delight to a German ear, and render those versed in them, agreeable and acceptable companions; but his chief excellence, (independent of his noble qualities as

a soldier), and that which ensured him a ready reception in all the castles, was his intimate acquaintance with the history, genealogy, and all the inter-marriages of the principal families in that part of the land; although his histories, when tracing the remote origin of a family, sometimes faded into fable, yet as the vanity and pride of ancestry were flattered, they were received with as much confidence as gospel truths. He had an eye of great quickness and vivacity, and his countenance at times assumed an irresistible expression of archness; and when attending his Lord in the capacity of Page, in his visits to Regensberg, (where he first became acquainted with Leonhardt), he kept the attendants in a continual agony of suppressed laughter by his comic powers, in spite of the presence of the despotic Count; but since he had enjoyed the dignity of squire, he had assumed a grave deportment, and seldom indulged in his former sallies of wit; and though naturally buoyant in spi-

rits, his constant disappointments in life, had tamed his disposition for mirth; for the recent loss of his patron had deprived him of the long coveted, and distinguished honour of Knighthood, which he was on the point of receiving, when the death of the Count snatched the untasted chalice from his lips. The night had far advanced when the parties severally retired to rest. Early on the following morning, having refreshed his weary limbs with slumber, and liberally rewarded his worthy host for his hospitality, Hugo departed for the Castle of Greiffen, in company with his trusty follower Charles.

CHAPTER II.

It is difficult to convey, by mere description, a correct idea of the general appearance of a distant country, and of the novelty, variety, and beauty of the scenery with which it is clothed ; and no combination of words, no tints of pencil, can paint in adequate colours, those brilliant but fleeting lights and shadows, which gild with transparent veil, the lofty and graceful outlines of the Alpine Mountains. The country at a short distance from the Castle of Greiffen rises into hills, remarkable more for beauty than for boldness, being of gentle acclivity, and separated from each other by lovely vales in all the pride of rude cultivation, and romantic inequalities, sometimes so gradually sloping, that the

transition from hill to vale is easy, but more frequently craggy and precipitous, where the descent is abrupt, and often impracticable. Nature in general has rounded the hills at top, which the bold and turbulent chieftains of this warlike region have chosen as the sites for the erection of their castles, with singular felicity. There, where the sagacity of lordly man has declined the site as unfit for the erection of his castellated mansion, groves of picturesque and magnificent oaks, old as the soil in which they drive their tortuous roots, crown the hills:—there, groups of the graceful larch, and dark gloomy fir, occupy many a rugged precipice and inaccessible clift, and here and there a solitary tree is scattered down the declivities, and frowns darkling on the vale below, whilst the warning torrent descends with crashing violence, and cleaves a channel for itself, tearing rocks and trees in its insane course. Nature has been bountiful in the distribution of her gifts; every val-

ley has its stream, every mountain its cascade; and as the land recedes from the lake of Zurich, it gradually rises, and the eye is delighted by that mass of forest, whose outline melts into that long and lofty range of mountains, forming the base of the towering Alps—many a lordly castle rears its proud head on its projecting points, and adds a rich variety to the scene—many a bold feature, which then wore a barren and desolated appearance, and which bade defiance to the rude hand of culture, has since been awakened into life and fertility, by superior and persevering industry.

Hugo pursued his toilsome way with as much rapidity as the nature of the path permitted, for travellers in those days did not enjoy the luxury of macadamised roads, and although he had frequently passed the forest in his former visits to the different chieftains in the neighbourhood, yet as the ground was now covered with snow, it was necessary to advance with considerable

caution, but having at length surmounted many of the difficulties, he reached one of those open glades, so frequent in these extensive forests, where the brilliant sun had in a great measure melted the snow, and as the ground was level, he soon fell into a train of meditation on his present prospects. He was sick, and heavy at heart, for he remembered with what buoyant spirits, and cheering hopes of anticipated honours, he had last traversed the same course, when accompanying Count Montfort on his visit to Sir Herman. It was at that period that his noble Lord had promised him the golden spurs, the very first occasion on which he should distinguish himself; but the principal actor had been removed from the scene, and all his fairy visions of honorably achieving that station in life, from which cruel destiny had hurled his family into death and poverty, had vanished into air, and left not a wreck behind. A fatality seemed to have accompanied him from his

early birth ; his life had been checquered with misfortune, and partial success, for at the moment he was steering with favourable gales to the long sought haven, some invisible power drove the vessel from its course, and the ideal grandeur escaped from his grasp ; but would the real possession of this fancied object, which his warm imagination painted in the most alluring colours, ensure his happiness ? how oft is the sweet refreshment of sleep, poisoned by the restless dream of ambition ! how oft had he read the hearts of those blessed to satiety with the world's distinctions, and did he find content within ? brilliant as they appeared in all the glare of military pomp, and happily, as many played their allotted parts, on the public stage of life, yet when they retired *behind* the scenes, and discarded their smiles, their assumed happiness and affability, with their splendid dress, when the veil was withdrawn from the eye, what a chaos of conflicting passions met the view ! each

struggling for the mastery, and striving for some imaginary phantom, for ever eluding their grasp, or if obtained, only increasing the confusion and disgust within. How many a kingly head would willingly barter its golden crown, for that secret peace, which content, and an humble reliance on a protecting providence, brings to its envied possessor!—this substantial blessing which gilds the passing scenes of life with pleasure, and permits us to pursue our course with even tenor, did Hugo enjoy, and he therefore did not long indulge in this moody disposition, or dwell on his fancied disappointments; for his early guardian had wisely taught him, to be satisfied with the lot which a benignant Providence might assign him, and humbly endeavour to draw comfort from every situation of life.

The splendid scenery which now attracted his eye, recalled to his memory, that pastoral district, where he had passed some of the happiest years of his life, in the

enjoyment of its simple and innocent pleasures, and the tear of recollection rolled down his manly cheek, as he dwelt on the more than parental care of his beloved protector in his tender years, and the many instances of affection, which at the moment had passed unheeded, and his conscience smote him, for his neglect and want of becoming love.

He was engaged in prudent resolutions to surmount his uneasy day dreams of ambition, when his attention was suddenly arrested by the violent pawing and neighing of his charger, which was immediately answered, and he had just ascended a steep hill, when he perceived a horse fully accoutred looking up towards him from a deep chasm on his left; naturally concluding that some accident had happened, he prepared to descend with great caution the frightful path, which a mountain stream had worked out; but Charles, who entertained the strongest affection for his master, earnestly endeavoured to

dissuade him, pointing out the danger of descending, and the probability that the horse belonged to some troop of marauders with which the forest was infested; but Hugo only ridiculed this opinion, and asserted, that it was very unlikely that the robbers would risk their own lives, and that of their cattle, in making so dangerous a spot their asylum, where they might easily be taken as it were in a net, without chance of escape: that some traveller had more probably mistaken the path, and had met with an accident in the descent. "But consider," replied Charles, "we have a long ride before us, and if any detention occurs, it will be night ere we arrive at Greiffen." "It is our duty," said Hugo, as good soldiers and Christians, to succour the distressed;" so giving his horse to his attendant, he carried his benevolent plan into execution, and with considerable difficulty arrived in safety at the bottom, where he soon discovered the body of a military man, stretched under an over-

hanging rock: he appeared pale, and the ghastly hue of his countenance was considerably heightened by the raven locks which in rich profusion overshadowed it, and his fine formed features evidently bore the impression of Italian origin. It was at first difficult to distinguish whether he only slept, or was quite dead; but on loosening his breast-plate, and feeling his heart, it yet appeared to retain considerable warmth; Hugo therefore poured some wine down his throat, and began chafing his limbs, as repose is the sleep of death, in this inclement season; after considerable exertion, and administering a second portion of wine, the lips slowly parted, and the soldier opened his eyes, but vainly essayed to speak: the additional warmth of the cloak and cordial soon however revived him, and restored his speech. “God be thanked,” he said, “and you my worthy deliverer, for rescuing me from the jaws of death; a few short hours, and my limbs would have been stiff with cold, and the

vital spark would have deserted this mortal frame : a delicious dream wrapt my senses in sweet oblivion, and when awakening sense restored my faculties, it appeared as if an angel hung over me, but now your aid has restored me to all the realities of life.”

“How came you into this dreary situation?” Hugo demanded, “and how long have you lain here? It is fortunate that your horse attracted my attention.”

“I have been engaged on the business of my lord, and was on my return to Regensburg Castle this morning, when, in consequence of the fall of snow, and of the heavy mist, I lost the proper track, and unfortunately descended into this deep chasm : oppressed with the fatigues of a long journey, I had dismounted with the intention of only taking some refreshment, but a sudden drowsiness, which is so apt to steal over the senses in cold weather, when the body is weakened by labour, closed my eyes in sleep, and it is to your

assistance, that it has not proved the slumber of death. I could only have remained a short time in this situation, for the day does not appear far advanced, since I dismounted."

"Has your morning fast been broken?" enquired Hugo.

"No," replied the stranger, "but I expect shortly to reach my Lord's residence, and the road is quite familiar to me, when once I gain the opposite eminence."

Hugo kindly offered him some refreshment, and whilst he was occupied in eating it, attempted to secure his horse, in which he soon succeeded.

"As you now appear to have recovered your strength," said Hugo, "it will be prudent to proceed, as we have both a considerable distance to ride. You have the language, but not the features, of the inhabitants of this country: do you derive your birth from Italy?" The stranger did not seem to relish this question, and looking rather confused, pretended to occupy

himself with his horse, but on Hugo repeating it, answered:—

“I am in reality an Italian, but have lived so long in Germany, that I may be rather considered as belonging to it, than to Italy.”

“Have you just returned from thence?”

The stranger evaded the direct answer, and simply replied, “That he had only been engaged on a mission for his lord.”

They had now conquered the difficulties of the dangerous ascent, and gained the direct road, when the stranger, evidently anxious to avoid further discourse, hurriedly thanked his deliverer, and clapping spurs to his horse, rapidly pursued his course. Hugo had indeed marked his hesitation, but having no authority to examine or detain him, had permitted him to proceed unmolested; yet he strongly suspected that the Count of Regensburg was meditating some mischief, and determined to impart his suspicions to Sir

Herman, who perhaps would be able to unravel the mystery: and mounting his horse, he pushed forward with Charles, being also anxious to arrive at their destination before the evening shadows obscured the path—for travelling in those vast forests was extremely dangerous at that period; numerous gangs of free-booters infested the roads, and the retainers of the war-like chieftains were strongly suspected of joining in their lawless proceedings: and although he had not encountered any positive obstruction, still the various suspicious looking personages occasionally appearing amongst the trees, and evidently reconnoitering, filled him with encreased anxiety, lest he should be benighted in the forest. Athletic in form, mounted on a noble charger, and seconded by his powerful attendant, few would be inclined to attack him, without great odds, and he cautiously guarded against sudden surprise, by avoiding all communication with the occasional travellers, who seemed anxious to pursue

their route in his company: at length the lofty towers of Greiffen appeared in sight, and he encreased his speed, as the deepening shadows of evening began to spread their sable hue over all the surrounding objects.

CHAPTER III.

THE castle of Greiffen was situated on one of those eligible sites already described, and built in the fashion of the times, with several lofty towers, erected as well for defence, as for the purpose of commanding a more extended view of the surrounding country. On the north, as well as on the eastern and western faces, the hill rose to a considerable elevation, and was perfectly inaccessible ; for where nature had failed in opposing obstacles, art had supplied the deficiencies. Notwithstanding these advantages, a strong wall, flanked by numerous towers, added to its greater security, and also embraced the extensive gardens in its circuit on the south, where the hill gradually sloped to the valley be-

low : numerous outwarks defended the approach to the main building. Deeply embosomed in rocky and woody mountains, the huts of the peasants, entirely formed of wood, were scattered around, surrounded by their favourite plum and cherry trees ; whilst a cow, a few goats, and some arable land, formed their only riches ; but little as they possessed, they were yet happy and contented, enjoying the powerful protection of the Lords of Greiffen. Surrounded by a fierce and turbulent race of mountaineers, the ladies seldom ventured to extend their excursions beyond their own peaceful valley, without a numerous escort, but generally enjoyed the freshness of the spring, and summer breeze, in the privacy of their own gardens. Their favourite resort was a lofty mound, on which an arbour had been formed, where the wild vine, and many sweet scented creepers, had twined their graceful tendrils round the ornamental trellis work, and afforded an agreeable

shelter from the intense heat of the summer's sun, whilst a superb fountain, whose numerous columns of water rose playfully in the glittering sunbeams, and then imbued with the various, and rich colours of the rainbow, fell in wild confusion; freshened the drooping flowers into life, and scented the air with their fragrance.

Sir Herman, noble in mind, and daring in deeds of arms, was ever ready to repel aggression, and protect the oppressed: whilst his wife, the Lady Ethelinda, obtained an equal reputation in the exercise of the milder virtues, and poverty and misery found her hand open to melting charity: their union had been blessed with one son and two daughters. The lovely Matilda, formed in nature's fairest mould, and the no less beautiful and sprightly Emmeline. The son, a youth of the greatest promise, inheriting the noble virtues and courage of his father, had fallen in battle the preceding Autumn, in the neighbourhood of Milan, where he had gone

to learn the art of war: his afflicted parents still mourned in silence his premature death.

Matilda, now in her seventeenth year, was above the middle standard, and distinguished for the freedom, yet ease and gracefulness of her movements: her eyes of heavenly blue, were large, languishing and expressive, sometimes beaming with animation, sometimes melting with tenderness, and telling better than language can express the native goodness of her heart, and the gentleness of her disposition; her teeth were even and beautifully white, and her light brown tresses hung in happy luxuriance over her shoulders; in her complexion the lily predominated, rather than the rose, and perhaps she wanted that rich crimson, which enlivens moderate features, and renders beautiful ones more irresistible; but when she became interested in conversation, the deficiency was no longer apparent, as the varied and playful thoughts of her pure

and cultivated mind, floated like lights and shadows over her expressive countenance, and the eloquent blood mantled on her cheek. If her person was lovely, she was equally distinguished for the beauties of her mind; for, by her quick perception, she had made a rapid advance in knowledge, and in all the accomplishments of the times; and with a clearness and precision of reasoning, had soon begun to display her mental powers: she was ever actuated by the most generous sentiments, and although her feelings were warm, they were regulated by a sound discretion; selfishness obtained no place in her bosom, and she was always ready to sacrifice her own pleasures, if by so doing, she could contribute to the advantage or happiness of others, and her amiable simplicity gave a nameless grace to her conduct on these occasions; for genuine feeling shuns all ostentation: she was deeply impressed with a pure sense of religion, and entertained the strictest

ideas of the duty of a child towards its parent: in times of distress, she was capable of displaying great elevation of mind, and of sustaining the bitter shafts of adversity with unshrinking energy.

The character of Emmeline, who was only in her fifteenth year, was not yet formed; but she evidently possessed quicker feelings than her sister, although her impressions were not so lasting—for as a lovely flower that droops in sadness at the first shock of the chilling breeze, soon raises its opening beauties to the genial rays of the returning sun; so her sorrows were but transitory, and new objects soon engaged her elastic affections: she was innocently gay, and her sprightly thoughts played like the morning blush over her varied features: she was devoted in her attachment to her sister, and almost adored her as a Being of those regions, whose purer skies bestow the only true happiness.

As Sir Herman and his Lady were

both partial to society, their castle was frequently filled with the neighbouring Baronial families, and the growing fame of Matilda's attractions naturally induced many a gallant youth to partake of her father's hospitality, as often as opportunity permitted: but the most favored amongst these was Sir Ernest of Grunengen, who had resided for two years, immediately after his father's death, under the roof of his new guardian Sir Herman, and had been considered and treated in the light of a brother, by Matilda and her sister: joining in all their innocent amusements, and ever ready to perform those little nameless offices of attention, which silently make their way to the heart, he had firmly twined himself round their young affections, and perhaps his noble courage, (for he had already distinguished himself in several actions,) and his manly figure had contributed to encrease their admiration, for as a celebrated author has declared, "Valour al-

ways appears more engaging in a beautiful body."

Since the death of their brother, Sir Ernest had returned to his castle, but as it was in the neighbourhood of Greiffen, he still passed the greater part of his time in their society, whenever his other avocations permitted; and he generally joined them in the arbour, whither they always resorted in fine weather, after their domestic arrangements were completed: for in Germany, even ladies of rank, were in the habit of regulating and attending to the affairs of the household, and the daughters were regularly instructed in those duties, that in the event of their marriage, they might be enabled to superintend their establishment with credit to themselves and their husbands; and even at this day, when a table is ill served, it is generally considered disreputable to the mistress of the house.

When the ladies were employed in their embroidery, and the various other occu-

pations in fashion at that period, Sir Ernest was always a welcome visitor, and frequently amused them with his guitar, on which he was a great proficient, accompanying it with his voice, which possessed considerable pathos as well as compass.

Matilda had nearly completed an elegant embroidered belt, which had frequently excited the Knight's curiosity. Many were the encomiums he passed on the beauty of the design, and declared it a prize worthy of an emperor. Matilda invariably observed strict silence, and evidently sought to turn the subject. This only encreased his anxiety, and his patience being exhausted, he said, "May I venture to demand, if this beautiful work of your fair hands, is to be the principal prize at the next tournament? He must be a bold rider, and well mounted, who awaits my charge."

"My dear Ernest," replied Matilda, "you really are very courageous this morning, but you will have no opportu-

nity of displaying your valour, in contending for this poor ornament, for in spite of the fierce looks which inflame your countenance, I am determined not to accept your challenge."

"I did but jest, dearest Matilda, you are certainly at liberty to embroider belts for—

"Even Sir Lutold," added Emmeline, with a malicious smile.

"I should imagine the Lady Matilda would not demean herself so far—nor would the Count presume to accept it."

"My dear Ernest, if you are so warlike, you may as well become knight-errant at once, and attack windmills; and there, one invitingly presents itself to your view, and appears as if suspended from the frowning rock opposite: the affair will be dangerous, and suitable to your daring courage: but then you must act in an unknightly manner, and dismount, unless indeed some fairy will come to your aid, and present you a winged Pegasus,

as I have often read in some of our celebrated and genuine histories ; but if you achieve this glorious deed, you will be covered with renown, and the nurseries will be enchanted with the true and faithful account of the furious battle, which the brave Sir Ernest waged with the lofty windmill of Greiffen, and your name will be celebrated in the songs of the Troubadours."

"Apropos, dearest sister, will you permit me to bring you some of the newest airs which I have just received from Italy ? But may I not guess for whom this belt is intended."

"It is for the Count of Regensberg," whispered Emmeline : "she is unwilling to mention his name, but I tell it you in confidence ; do not betray me."

"Fie, fie sister," replied Matilda, "have mercy on poor Ernest."

"Will you not present it to me, dearest?" the youth eagerly exclaimed. "I pardon

you for wishing to surprise me, but I will prize it dearly.”

“My dear Ernest, with all your wisdom, and confident looks, your calculations have not proved correct in this instance: however it is for a noble knight.”

“Reflect, my dear Matilda, (I use a brother’s licence); is it quite consonant with the strict rules of female propriety, to present gentlemen with gifts, except on occasions of public ceremony?”

“Indeed Ernest, your notions of decorum have suddenly become very particular: the words have scarce died on your lips, since you demanded it for yourself.”

“Ah! Matilda, you forget our long intimacy, and you will scarcely consider me in the same light as Sir Lutold, and the other Knights who frequent this castle.”

“Certainly not,” Emmeline quickly replied; “we treat you as a brother, and you well know, that sisters do not trouble themselves to embroider ornaments for

such near relations.”—The youth’s countenance became flushed, and Matilda having pity on his distress, said:—

“My dear Ernest, to give you a proof of my sisterly affection, and the confidence I place in your judgment, you shall decide on this important subject—but give me your candid opinion—may I venture to present it to my father on his approaching birth-day?”

“My sweetest Matilda, (and the countenance of the youth brightened, as he raised her delicate hand to his lips,) you have relieved my mind from a load of misery.”

“Your misery then,” replied Matilda, “arose from your own jealousy. You conjured up phantoms which had no existence, except in your own heated imagination. You seem to entertain a mortal dread of the Count of Regensburg: I candidly acknowledge that he is very agreeable, and whatever may be his real sentiments, he still veils them with decen-

cy, and treats women with that deference, which their sex entitles them to expect: then he is handsome, brave, and accomplished."

"But, my dear Ernest," his tormentor again exclaimed, "is the sun too powerful for you in this early month of April: it really gives you a most brilliant colour."

"I shall repay you for your kindness this morning, Emmeline," replied Sir Ernest. "Pardon me, dearest Matilda, my sincere regard for your happiness renders me tenderly alive to every thing that relates to you.—Perhaps you are not aware of the reports regarding Sir Lutold's proceedings."

"As Sir Lutold has ever conducted himself with elegance and propriety, since he has been received as a guest in my father's castle, I shall continue to receive him with the respect due to his high station; and it may be permitted me to admire him as an agreeable friend, without feeling any warmer regard: whilst

my father sanctions his visits, I shall consider it as a full pledge of his worth, and not condescend to listen to the scandalous tales of the neighbourhood, invented no doubt by those who are jealous of his superior merit."—The brow of the youth became again clouded with anger, his eye flashed fire, and he was preparing to answer these unpleasant truths, when the trumpet sounded the preparation for dinner, and the sisters laughing, tripped lightly away, leaving him to vent his anger to the winds.

Was Sir Ernest aware of the sentiments that pervaded his breast?—did he vainly imagine, that brotherly affection occasioned the new and painful feelings which agitated his frame? Yes, he still fondly flattered himself that he regarded Matilda in the light of a sister, and that it was only a sense of duty, which urged him to hint at Sir Lutold's character, and increasing attentions. These reflections crowded on his mind, when the repeated

blast of the trumpet awakened him to the necessity of appearing at the Baron's hospitable board.

CHAPTER IV.

ANXIOUS to secure his seat next Matilda, Sir Ernest hastened his steps, but on arriving at the hall, found all the guests arranged, and Sir Lutold entertaining Matilda with some very interesting conversation, to which she was evidently listening with great and pleased attention: a seat had however been reserved for him near the Baroness. The dinner was served in the style that usually obtained in that country: each dish was handed to the guests in succession, commencing with the soup; the larger joints, amongst which the boar's head was conspicuous, were first exhibited on the centre table, and being then removed to a side table, were carved by the attendants, and presented to the

company ; the last viand being fish. This ceremony was confined to the higher table ; the guests at the lower end, being obliged to carve for themselves. Wines of various sorts, and of superior flavor, were handed round in constant succession, whilst a certain portion of inferior quality and strength, was placed beside each cover. The favorite German beverage (beer) was liberally served to those of inferior degree. As the Baron maintained a large establishment, the table extended a considerable length, in the vast hall ; but there were few guests of distinction, besides the Count of Regensberg, and Sir Ernest of Grunengen.

The conversation, during the repast, was principally supported by individuals, but at length became more general, and turned principally on the power and influence of the female character, in softening the natural ferocity of man. Matilda, naturally interested on subjects so congenial to her feelings as a woman, had been much

amused with the pleasing anecdotes related by Sir Lutold, who had passed a considerable period in the sunny regions of Italy, where the romantic passion of love is carried to greater excess, than in the colder climate of Germany. Ethelinda observed, that the ladies were highly flattered by the praise bestowed on them by so great a warrior. “But do you really consider an intercourse with females, as effectual, either in purifying the minds, or in softening the manners of men?”

“Undoubtedly,” replied Sir Lutold, “an intercourse with the more polished females, naturally leads to a gradual neglect of that habitual passion for war, and all its attendant barbarities; and the influence of women imperceptibly gaining an ascendancy, encourages the mind to the cultivation of the moral virtues; inspires it with more noble sentiments, and revives in the hardened heart of the soldier, the love of peace, and of the more humanized pleasures of social life: it renders them not

only affectionate fathers, fond husbands, and generous friends, but good masters, tender of the privileges, ease, and advantages, of those placed under their immediate control."

Matilda ventured to remark: "This benevolence of mind, is deserving of the highest merit, and is particularly necessary and praiseworthy in these times, since the weak and helpless are subject to the most revolting violence, and scarcely experience the common sympathies of humanity."

Sir Lutold, pleased with Matilda's approbation, replied: "He who seeks to unite his own glory, with the welfare of his species, sheds more lustre on the honour of Knighthood, than one who merely finds delight in war and devastation, for the gratification of his own ambition."

Sir Ernest, writhing under the pain of the late conversation with Matilda, and still less pleased with the occupation of his usual seat by Sir Lutold, would probably have indulged in some severe remarks on

his assumption of this dignified respect for humanity, had he not been restrained by his high regard for Sir Herman, and the ladies of his family; and he contented himself by observing, that these judicious observations would have done honour to the most enlightened period; and it afforded him infinite satisfaction, that Sir Lutold's liberal and comprehensive mind, had discarded its former prejudices in favor of military ambition; and that under the fostering effects of his superior capacity and leading example, the system of cruelty and rapine, which had so long disgraced their unhappy country, would terminate, and be succeeded by a more peaceful system, and by the blessings of civil jurisdiction. A slight frown passed over the countenance of Sir Lutold, but as his temper was ever under control, where his interest was concerned, he replied with his usual quickness and address, that circumstances had hitherto compelled him to pass his life in camps, and having

only considered the theory, he would now try the practical effects of peace; and he firmly trusted, with the encouragement of his fair and accomplished countrywomen, he should succeed in inducing the turbulent peasantry to exchange the sword for the ploughshare. The Baroness and Matilda expressed themselves highly pleased with his intentions, and declared, that they should greatly esteem those who attempted to ameliorate the low condition of society. Sir Herman fortunately observing the flushed countenance and contemptuous looks of Sir Ernest, engaged him in particular conversation, and thus avoided an explosion.

But we must now turn our attention to that part of the table, which the Squires occupied, where a new guest had been introduced, in the person of Hugo, who had arrived the preceding evening; and having been admitted to an audience of the Baron on that morning, had tendered his services, which had been favourably ac-

cepted; Sir Herman having frequently heard the most flattering testimonials of his worth, from the late Count of Montfort; and being also well aware of his strong claims to the honour of Knighthood. Amongst the numerous guests at this portion of the table, Hugo recognized with great pleasure his early friend Otho Steinberg, whom he had last parted with at Basle. On questioning him, regarding his success in life, Otho replied:—"I at first practised as a portrait painter, with indifferent success; for having no good models, the art being yet in its infancy, I could not sufficiently improve my style: and indeed it is a profession, in which it is difficult to give satisfaction. If I painted the ugly, they were sorely displeased, and seemed quite surprised, that I could presume to distort their features, and render them such objects, that the whole country must have been ransacked for the most frightful images, and that my imagination had completed the hideous phantoms; for

without the slightest shade of vanity, they could truly declare, that they had often received their just share of compliments. On one occasion, a rich old Burgher, decorated with red hair, and black and uneven teeth, and who, by some fatality, constantly kept his mouth open, displaying the model of an irregular fortress, demanded my assistance, being anxious to present a true and brilliant copy of his resplendent charms to his enamoured mistress. When the work was completed, and the little man advanced with high exultation, to view the perfect representation of his noble form, he started back in alarm, as if he had walked on a snake; his ferret eyes twinkled with rage, and his mouth actually foamed, as he impatiently demanded, if I had mistaken him for a beast, and attempted in my dreams to sketch a lion with a red mane. I modestly replied, "that as nature had blessed him with red hair, it was not my province to alter it." He had in the mean time rushed from the

picture to the mirror, and having either by design or accident closed the hideous aperture, whilst comparing the copy with the original, exultingly defied me to shew the resemblance between the closed opening in his natural countenance, and the wide spread cavern, which in the canvass seemed ready to engulph him: then bursting into absolute fury, roared forth such a torrent of abuse, that my patience and temper became exhausted; and with an assumed air of coolness I informed him, that if the picture did not please, there was no occasion to purchase it, although the resemblance was certainly perfect; that I should readily embrace an opportunity of disposing of it to greater advantage, having just received an order to paint a sign for an inn, and that the slight addition of a tail, would render the portrait of a beast complete. This staggered the vain old man; he regarded me for an instant, and paying the money immediately, beauty

with the lion of the scarlet mane, both disappeared from my study." The poor Burgher, and his mortified vanity, occasioned a general laugh.

"You, no doubt," observed Hugo, "succeeded in pleasing the fair sex."

"Alas!" replied Steinberg, "I was equally unfortunate with them, and the beautiful became as unsatisfied as the ugly; for their mirrors displayed such forms and features to their enraptured view, that according to the old adage, 'seeing is believing.' The pretty damsels were fully convinced of the truth of their silent flatterers: and if their own vanity was not sufficient for this comforting conclusion, their admirers (and their task was not difficult) soon confirmed them in the belief, that they surpassed even angels, in loveliness and perfection. But woe to the poor uncourtly painter—for I little imagined, that angels in earthly costume had honoured me with a sitting; and dear

bought experience taught me, that flattery, not truth, is the grand secret of a portrait painter's reputation."

"You, of course, were compelled," remarked Hugo, "to abandon your profession, or change your quarters."

"By no means," replied the painter, "although failing with the two opposites, beauties and frights, yet the plain afforded me some encouragement; since not expecting much from my attempts, if my pencil fortunately caught some fleeting grace, which added expression to their otherwise indifferent features, they were perfectly content with my exertions and talents, and rewarded me amply. But this source of emolument did not continue for a long period, as few were inclined to consider themselves plain; and my reputation being slandered, by the hatred and malice of the indignant angels and frights, necessity at length compelled me to embrace the profession of arms."

Hugo was congratulating his friend on

the noble choice he had made, when the Baron rising from table, retired with his guests. Sir Lutold, and the other visitors, taking leave of their noble host, mounted their horses, and pursued their route to their respective castles.

Sir Herman having proceeded to the grand parade, and inspected his troops, summoned Hugo to his presence, to give him the necessary instructions regarding the new duties that would be required of him; when the fine form, and soldierlike bearing of his new Squire, excited his warm admiration; and there was something peculiar in his countenance, which seemed to recall the remembrance of other days: there was a striking resemblance of features, which had once been familiar to his eyes; and the form of his early friend, the Count of Altenburg, seemed renewed in the figure of the youthful Hugo; but it was only the thought of the moment, and the idea passed from his imagination, like the fleeting shadow of a day dream; for

the grave restores not its dead so soon: at least no subsequent information had confirmed the report of the escape of the Count's son, on the bloody capture of his castle. Yet the voice, the very manner of the youth, so strongly recalled his deceased friend to his recollection, that a secret and warm feeling of regard for the welfare of his squire imperceptibly gained possession of his soul, which constantly displayed itself in acts of kindness and confidence towards him. The oftener, however, he conversed with Hugo, the more impressed he became with his original suspicion regarding his birth, and determining to ascertain the truth, he questioned him so closely, and appeared so deeply interested on the subject, that Hugo at length confessed that he had reason to consider himself noble, and that he was still in possession of some documents of his father, which confirmed the truth of the supposition regarding his gentle birth. That there was a mystery in his fate,

which time, at some convenient opportunity, would unravel; and at the same time confiding some important secrets to the Baron, he obtained his ready promise to assist him in asserting his just claims.

CHAPTER V.

THE lovely sisters had repaired to their favourite arbour in the garden, and were contemplating with delight the beautiful prospect, when Matilda requested Emmeline to observe the grey mist rising in the deep and damp valley below, and obscuring the scattered huts of the peasants, whilst above they enjoyed a brilliant sky.

“Yes,” replied Emmeline, “the comparison is happy at the present moment: the one is gloomy like the countenance of poor Ernest, whilst the other resembles the brilliant and animated features of the triumphant Sir Lutold. The first you have nearly destroyed by your frowns, the latter you have certainly enlivened with your smiles. What dreadful crime has the un-

fortunate culprit committed? I must have compassion on the poor youth, and plead his cause. Oh! let pity thaw the icy coldness of your heart; let compassion soften the dreadful sternness of that brow, and let justice be tempered with mercy."

"You are certainly a very able advocate, my dear Emmeline," replied Matilda, "but at present there is no occasion for your powerful intercession, since there can be nothing to pardon, where no crime has been committed: and I can scarcely imagine, that Ernest can be displeased at finding his seat occupied, since it was occasioned by his own negligence, in not repairing in time to the hall. However, his disappointment, if he has really experienced any, will teach him to be more punctual in future."

"May I now venture dearest," (demanded Emmeline,) "to ask what occasioned that triumphant expression in the Count of Regensburg's countenance? Have you lent a gracious ear to his polished

compliments?—or have you, pardon the wicked thought, for once been malicious; or rather, since the last observation does not appear to meet with your approbation, have you judiciously displayed your high displeasure, at those slanderous reports, regarding Sir Lutold's character, by treating the object of them with marked attention?"

“My dear Emmeline, where have you learnt this happy mode of shewing your regard for my amiable dispositions? First, I am malicious; then, I am described, as actuated by resentment, because Ernest in the warmth of his brotherly affection, cautions me against one, whom he considers as unworthy of my regard; and this individual happening to be placed next me at table, is treated with the politeness due to all my father's guests. Now, although I am ever ready to pay becoming attention to his opinions, still it may be permitted me, to place greater reliance on my father's judgment and experience;

and since he pleases to countenance the Baron of Regensberg, I cannot presume to treat him with rudeness, particularly as he invariably behaves with distinguished politeness to our sex; and indeed my sage sister, you have often expressed to me your high opinion of Sir Lutold's abilities and accomplishments. Am I alone forbidden to enjoy his amusing conversation? And when he descants on the influence women exercise in softening the rugged minds of men, and earnestly demands our assistance, are we, although deeply interested and impressed with the justice, and the importance of his observations, to withhold our countenance, and refuse to aid the glorious design? Oh no, but us rather unite with this accomplished politician, and powerful warrior, in pressing on the progress of this desirable improvement. True the objection may be, that Sir Lutold has not hitherto practised these noble resolutions; but it still does not become us, to blight the opening blos-

som of returning virtue; for truth, though it may at first be obscured by the mists of ignorance, and be concealed for a season, will eventually pierce the dark shadows, and blaze forth in all its native purity. Oh! may the time arrive, when this our own dear and unhappy country, may recover from its desolation and wretchedness; when lawless rapine, and military domination, with all its attendant miseries, may cease; and order, and justice, may shed their influence far and wide, and enable us once more to enjoy the advantages, pleasures, and all those tender sympathies, so necessary to alleviate the pains and sorrows inseparable from existence!”

“ My dearest Matilda, you would make an admirable leader for another crusade: your beauty and eloquence would soon attract a numerous army to your standards, and the golden age would again appear on earth.—But still you have not yet ac-

counted for the gaiety of Sir Lutold, and the dejection of your former favorite."

"You are unreasonable, my dear Emeline, and wish to attribute to me the power of a sorceress. Can I cause joy, or sorrow? but if unable to produce the actual effect, I can sometimes explain the reason: and it is a common occurrence in society. The one joined, and contributed his share to the general conversation, and became animated; and being naturally listened to with attention, from the interest of the subject, contrived not only to please others but himself also—whilst the other, brooding over some fancied slight, the work of his own imagination, sat abstracted, and wrapt in his own reflections; and whilst others were warmed with generous sentiments, he became soured with the acid of his own thoughts. But look around on Nature, dearest, she does not always wear the same countenance, but is sometimes brilliant, at others sombre. See

that sloping hill tinged with the golden streaks of the sun, whilst yon towering alp is wrapt in the dark mantle of the passing cloud: when rough winter covers the earth with snow, she sinks into the slumber of death, but when spring returns, with its green woods, and flowery meadows, she revives to life and beauty again; and why should it be otherwise with man? Fortunate events gladden his heart, and light up his countenance in joy. Again, real distress, or more frequently some imaginary trifle, saddens, and plunges him into gloom—but my work is completed, and this fatal belt, which is probably the cause of all this mischief, shall be presented with true delight to my affectionate father on his next birth-day. However, I must commence another, to restore the smiles to dear Ernest's mournful face. But wherefore has the truant disappeared? he seldom remains long at table; for happily he is not addicted to our odious German fashion, and does not try how

much wine he can swallow, before he degrades himself to the level of a beast.—I trust that he is not offended, but his disposition is too generous to retain his resentment any length of time; I cannot however possibly imagine, that any expressions of mine, can have occasioned offence; I will most readily apologize, as it is not in my nature idly or intentionally to give pain to any individual, especially to one, whom I love with all the sincerity of a sister's affection.”

“You are indeed all gentleness and perfection,” sighed Emmeline, throwing her arms round her sister's neck, whilst her head fell on her shoulder. “I wish words could describe all the love I experience for you; your kindness makes my life flow with happiness; you have much to pardon;—my thoughtless disposition often leads me astray.” The sisters gave way to all the genuine warmth of their feelings, and expressing their mutual regard, fondly vowed, that should the time ever

come, when they must be separated, and leave their father's peaceful home, though hill and dale should divide their bodies, they yet would still be united in spirit—and trusted, however melancholy the first separation might prove, they should receive the greater pleasure when re-assembled under the same roof.

CHAPTER VI.

SIR Lutold was descended from an ancient and noble family, and inherited large possessions on the banks of the Lake of Zurich, and in the neighbourhood of Greiffen. His father had played a conspicuous part in all the intrigues and wars of his time, and had frequently assisted in the various conflicts which the Barons waged against each other; prudently selecting that side by which his own interest was most likely to be benefited. Turbulent in spirit, and excelling in all martial exercises, war had been the leading passion of his soul, and there had been no want of opportunity for indulging his fancy. Possessing eminent natural abilities, and frequently attending the Emperor to his Italian wars, he had

acquired the accomplishments of that polished country, and had imparted all his knowledge to his only son Sir Lutold, who inherited all his martial inclinations, but whilst he copied, and studiously followed the great, neglected the minor qualities. Splendid on all occasions of state and ceremony, but simple in his domestic arrangements, Sir Roderic rather encreased than diminished his ancestral possessions, notwithstanding the expensive wars in which he had been engaged; and though, like all the great lords of that period, he was not over scrupulous, where his interest was materially concerned, yet on minor occasions he contrived to preserve a semblance of justice, and was never convicted of any violent act of cruelty; although it was once reported, that in a terrible storm of passion, he had ordered two Knights, whom he had taken prisoners, and from whom he demanded, in accordance with the custom of the times, the usual ransom, which they contumaciously refused to pay,

to be thrown from the lofty rock, on which his castle was situated. But as their names were never mentioned, and no individuals of that rank were missing at that period in the neighbouring provinces, the report was considered as the effect of slander, and no truth was attached to it. After the death of the Emperor Frederic, he had joined the standard of Conrad, and fell fighting in his cause, and was succeeded in his title and estates by the present subject of our narrative.

There was a striking air of dignity in the personal appearance of the Count of Regensberg, which greatly prepossessed the spectator in his favor; but his character and disposition were singular. Generous and zealous in his offices of friendship, but equally implacable in his resentments, he appeared to derive an exquisite pleasure in pursuing the object of his hatred, and never considered the means, provided he could attain the accomplishment of his desires. Often when

one expected to find him an enemy, he proved a warm friend, and showered kindness, instead of enmity, where his interest was concerned. He was ever able to mask his passions, under the specious veil of moderation; and his talents, genius, and information, threw a charm over his polished manners: he was indeed well versed in the art of dissimulation, and with a look, could ask and read the answer in the countenance of the interrogated without his permission: and whilst his breast was inwardly torn with contending passions, his features would preserve unruffled calmness. Avarice was not his failing, for he was profuse in his largesses to his troops, who served him, even in his greatest difficulties, with a courage and fidelity worthy of a better cause.

After the death of the Emperor Frederic in Italy, the affairs of Germany fell into the greatest confusion: the clergy took arms, and fortified their castles; the strong oppressed the weak, and each Baron con-

stituted himself a sovereign, and ruled his paltry territories with the sword: all laws, human or divine, were disregarded, and the most dreadful barbarities were committed with impunity. Several rising commercial towns had assumed independence, enacted municipal laws, and formed mutual leagues against the encroachments and the rapacity of the feudal lords.

Lavish in his expences, and considering a system of strict economy as beneath his dignity, Sir Lutold was soon involved in pecuniary difficulties, and often resorted to means which dreaded the light, to recruit his exhausted finances.

On his return from Italy, where he first became acquainted with the celebrated Count Rinaldo, he found the forests overrun with banditti, and commencing an attack, defeated several straggling parties, when a monk one day requested an audience, and on being questioned as to the object of his visit, replied:—

“ Peace be unto you, my son, I am come

to shrive you, and such of your garrison, as require ghostly comfort, after the fatigues of their long warfare: you will not find me a very rigid confessor; and the penances, I may find it necessary to enjoin, will pour balm into your wounded hearts." The person of the monk was tall and commanding, and his countenance rather bore the bold and undaunted character of the soldier, than the meekness and humility of a son of the church. Sir Lutold thought that the face was familiar, but then he had seen it under a different garb; not in the sober habiliments of the cloister, but in the iron dress of mantled war.

"Sir Lutold appears to recognise an old acquaintance, and he is not mistaken in his conjecture; but perhaps the Castle of Altenburg will bring the object of his scrutinizing glance more immediately to his recollection: and if, after my duties as a son of the church, are rigidly performed, the noble Knight will pledge me

his honour, for a safe conduct, I may possibly make some proposals, worthy of his serious consideration."

Sir Lutold's complexion was slightly heightened, as he recognised Bertoldo, the disgraced Abbot of Muntsberg, and now the leader of one of those free bands, ever ready to commit any enormities, provided they were well paid, or expected to obtain plunder.

"So, my friend, how have you fared since we parted at Altenburg? Your features are certainly not altered, but your complexion being so much changed, prevented me recognising you at the moment."

Bertoldo smiled, and replied; "a small quantity of liquid enables me to vary my complexion as occasion demands; but with old friends, disguise will not be necessary in future. However, I will immediately touch on the object of my interview.

"You have, since your return, Sir Count, conceived an extraordinary hatred to rapine, and your troops have, on two or

three recent occasions, attacked and dispersed some straggling parties of the forest corps. Now, since we are in private, it is unnecessary to wrap our sentiments in mystery; therefore, using the privilege of an old friend, I at once demand, if your new feelings are hostile to every species of open and honourable plunder?—not those petty thefts, where the miserable wretch sculks in the dark, and barely obtains sufficient to pay his confession for absolution; but where troop meets with troop, and contends in desperate struggle for life and death, and the reward of the conqueror is some rich castle, such as Hockstet, Altenburg,—but your memory will readily supply the names of the remainder.” The countenance of Sir Lutold was calm, and exhibited no indication of internal excitement, at this home thrust, as he coolly replied:—

“The instances you mention, Bertoldo, bear no relation to the point in question. As an independent Baron, I waged war

with my equals, in consequence of just provocation received : for not being able to obtain redress by negociation, necessity compelled me to determine the dispute with the sword ; and as the expences of the preparations were considerable, it was in strict accordance with the laws of Knighthood, and the custom of war, that I should remunerate myself with the rich spoils of the castle when taken.”

Bertoldo smiled during the recital of this ingenious narrative, and replied :—

“ Your vision of the affair, Sir Lutold, throws new light on a dark subject, and eases my conscience of a heavy load, as I have hitherto considered the attack and surprise of the castle, as a most treacherous act, and only rendered palatable by the rich plunder found in the coffers ; and though my conscience was pretty well seared, I yet remember the indiscriminate slaughter of the garrison with regret.”

Sir Lutold himself did not feel quite easy on this tender point, and had endeavoured

to conceal his share in the bloody deed, as unworthy his knightly honour, for he was a rigid observer of outward decorum, and his dissimulation and art had enabled him to draw a veil over many a dark deed. In order to turn the subject of conversation, he assumed a less cold demeanour, and replied: "You seem to have assumed the language and sentiments with the dress of a monk, who enquires into the merits of a case, when success justifies it: but my dear friend, let us avoid these nice distinctions, and enter at once into the subject of your visit. You will no doubt agree with me in the propriety of clearing the forest of these petty mauraunders, who keep the neighbourhood in a constant state of excitement, and draw the serious attention of the great chieftains to their movements. I have in the mean time every wish to forward your views."

"Now you speak like yourself," replied Bertoldo, "and I will candidly impart to you my plan. I have lately traversed the

banks of the Rhine for a great distance, and have observed that many of the nobles derive a considerable income by levying a tax on the rich merchandise continually passing and repassing. Now as your territory extends along the banks of the Lemnat, and of the Lake of Zurich; and as one of your old castles might easily be rendered habitable, and moreover is conveniently situated for the purpose, I think we might follow the example of the Rhenish Barons, and share in the rich spoil. And as the rising republics carry on a considerable commerce with Italy, my friends would readily acquaint me, when the convoys were likely to pass the Alps. Indeed the owners would probably consent to pay you a considerable duty, provided you engaged to protect them from the rapacity of others: besides it is a doubt with me, whether you do not in strict justice hold the right of taxing the transfer of goods, as the boats frequently seek shelter under your castles."

Sir Lutold, whose finances were in a disordered state, would readily have assented to this equitable proposal of his respectable friend, had not other considerations of great importance induced him to hesitate. In fact, he had entertained, since the death of Sir Herman's only son, a particular affection, for the rich succession of the noble domain of Greiffen; and this inclination was considerably increased, when he beheld the surpassing beauty of the lovely Matilda, whose hand he was determined to gain: but being fully acquainted with the purity of her character, he was particularly anxious to preserve appearances; and we have already seen, how well he had succeeded in rendering himself an agreeable visitor, at her father's castle.

Bertoldo, observing his hesitation, requested to hear his objections to the plan, as it might easily be modified.

Sir Lutold observed, "my sentiments perfectly accord with your's, and there

cannot be a doubt of the justice of my claims to a transit duty; but as the principal knights, who could not share in the plunder, might be inclined to doubt the legality of these measures, and offer resistance to the collection; and as I have the strongest motives for not wishing to draw the public attention to my conduct at the present moment, I must at once decline the tempting proposal."

Bertoldo replied, "I rejoice that your objections are so light, since the difficulties can easily be obviated, and the plan effectually carried into immediate execution. There is no necessity for your appearing openly in the affair, as I am ready to form all the arrangements, and pay one half of the profits to you—but then you must secretly afford us protection!"

The terms of this honourable scheme, were soon settled, and Bertoldo marched his followers to take possession of their new quarters, which were soon rendered habitable. The Abbot was not a man to

adopt half measures, and the depredations at length became so serious, that the attention of the public was aroused, to find means of softening this crying evil. The worthy Italian was a perfect master of the art of disguise, and constantly ventured into Zurich and other trading towns, to obtain information of the mercantile transactions; and was therefore generally apprised, of the intended departure, or expected arrival of rich goods; and was always properly prepared to exact his share of the profits; and the owners had no reason to complain of the weight of their bales, after these severe visitations. He also contrived his measures so artfully, that a considerable period elapsed, before any suspicion was attached to the followers of Sir Lutold; he of course affected great indignation at the supposition, and as no positive proof could be adduced, the rumour soon died away. It was at length the frequency of these reports, which induced Sir Ernest to expos-

tulate, and warn Matilda, not to encourage too great an intimacy. We shall see in the sequel, that what was merely suspicion, soon became confirmed truth, and eventually led to the most disastrous results.

In the mean time, Sir Lutold, knowing the dangerous ground on which he stood, and that should Sir Herman and his daughter become acquainted with these unworthy proceedings, he might bid adieu to his hopes of obtaining Matilda by honourable means as his bride, he embraced every opportunity of making an impression on her, by the most touching and artful attentions, for few men better understood the approaches to the female heart. In the mean time he had frequent conferences with his worthy coadjutor, in order to check his rapacity, and induce him to be more moderate in his demands on the poor merchants. Bertoldo readily promised, what he was inwardly resolved not to perform: for having once tasted the sweets of this

rich mine of wealth, he was determined to gratify his avaricious disposition, as much as present circumstances would permit. It may be asked, if the wily Italian kept a faithful account of his employer's share? However anxious he was to amass, yet still he was too well acquainted with the sternness of the noble Knight, and with his haughty and implacable character, to venture to excite his suspicion, or incur his displeasure; and therefore thought it more prudent to assign him a tolerable fair portion, considering that as long as the supply proved considerable, no particular enquiries would be made.

Bertoldo was a man of desperate character, and had enjoyed considerable reputation as the Abbot of Muntsberg: not on account of his superior sanctity as a churchman, but from his acknowledged talents and energy as a soldier; for in those turbulent times, when the Emperors and Popes were constantly engaged in the most bloody wars, prelates of the first

rank, were frequently seen clothed in mail, and leading on their troops in person ; and if possessed of skill and valour, more deference was paid to their military than to their spiritual capacity, so that Bertoldo wisely considered he was more likely to attain future grandeur, by the good services of his sword, than by the more humble qualities of piety and humility. His presence was acceptable, both to the nobles and their retainers, not only from his great accomplishments as a soldier, and his strenuous exertions in aiding to obtain the victory, but also from the tenderness of his feelings, and readiness to ease their wounded consciences, suffering under the weight of the many enormities committed during the heat and excitement of battle. In the worthy Abbot, they always found a gentle monitor, alive to the weakness and infirmities of our nature ; ever kind in admitting the power of the human passions, and in granting absolution to the afflicted and repentant sinner. Despite of

the bold and plastic character of the churchman, fortune did not smile on his exertions, and all his dreams of fancied greatness vanished into air, for unfortunately in joining Conrad, he chose the losing side, and was not only deprived of his abbey by the victorious Pope, but also of a high ecclesiastical appointment, to which he was on the eve of being promoted, in consequence of his former services in the cause of the church militant. Mourning his false judgment, and compelled to retreat with the shattered remains of his gallant free bands, and to seek other means of support, he had determined to join his old friend and associate Sir Lutold, and demand his protection. And soon discovering the impoverished state of his finances, he made the iniquitous proposal, which promised to produce such a golden harvest, and recruit his exhausted coffers. The fact of his being a priest had also great weight, for these orthodox chiefs had their occasional scruples of

conscience, and mixed up religion with their deeds of darkness, a feeling which disgraced those times. Like a certain prince of a later period, who considered it a terrible sin to eat meat on a fast day, and having been visited by his mistress on one of those days of abstinence, regaled her with the rich fare of bread dipped in oil, and salad, which anecdote the lady afterwards related with great drollery; and the prince being asked, why he had condemned his mistress to this meagre regimen? replied, that although he had no objection to commit one sin, he was anxious to avoid committing two at the same time.

CHAPTER VII.

ANXIOUS for the welfare of his only child, and sensible of the dangers, to which a young and lovely female would naturally be exposed, in the distracted state of his country, Count Ludovic of Herstein, was desirous of uniting the fair Bertha, to some nobleman worthy of her beauty and virtues. Many of the most powerful Knights eagerly contended for the honour of her fair hand; some inspired with the genuine sentiments of disinterested love, but by far the greater portion, attracted by the more sordid hope of obtaining her rich inheritance. Amongst her many admirers, two were distinguished above the rest: Sir William, Count of Altenburg, celebrated for his undaunted

courage, and the manly virtues of his mind, but poor in the riches of this world; for time had curtailed with unsparing hand the once great possessions of his ancient house, and left but a moderate district round his castle: whilst his rival, Udo, Count of Badenstein, enjoyed extensive and rich domains, with numerous strong castles: but he was a man of despotic character, governed by the fiercest passions, and report attributed many a dark and bloody deed to his murderous hand.

Left to the freedom of her own choice, the lovely Bertha bestowed her heart and hand on the gallant Sir William; who was in all respects worthy of her choice; and her father confirming her decision with great satisfaction, the nuptials were celebrated with a pomp, becoming the rank and wealth of the parties. The gallant knights who had aspired to the honour of her alliance, yielded with a good grace to their disappointment, conscious of the superior merit of Sir William of Al-

tenburg, who was justly esteemed the noblest and bravest knight in the land.

But not so patiently did Sir Udo bear his fortunate rival's happy success. Indignant at the rejection of his love, and still more incensed at the loss of the rich and extensive districts, which formed the beautiful Bertha's dowry; but artfully masking his irritated feelings, he attended the hateful ceremony; and though his countenance bore some slight marks of dejection, he joined with apparent cordiality in the gay festivities, inwardly meditating a deep and bloody revenge; yet so specious was his behaviour, that his unsuspecting victims were at length lulled into fancied security.

Time advanced in his rapid course, and the noble pair enjoyed their dreams of happiness without any interruption; since Sir Udo, still inflexible in his determination, had found no opportunity of carrying his revengeful plans into execution. Though little apprehensive of danger,

which his lofty courage taught him to despise, he yet dreaded an open attack, for the bravery of Sir William, and the attachment of his numerous friends, precluded even the hope of partial success.

Indifferent however to the means which he employed, provided he could attain his object, he embraced the occasion of a temporary absence of her husband, to attempt the surprise of Altenburg, and carry off the lady Bertha. For this purpose, he instructed two of his most confidential and intelligent retainers, Pietro and Massaniello, men whose hearts were blackened with crimes, to proceed under the disguise of pilgrims to Altenburg Castle, and demand protection for the night: that exactly at one hour after midnight, they were silently to murder the warder, seize the keys, and admit a chosen body of troops. The worthy confederates were confident of success, provided they could succeed in their attack on the warder, without creating alarm in the garrison.

“But Pietro do you imagine,” said Sir Udo, “that your project will be feasible. Surely the cries and struggles of the dying man will disturb the guard.”

“Oh! leave that to us,” replied the trusty bravo; “we have had too much practice in our native country in these affairs, to render the issue uncertain, provided the drowsy warder sleeps; and we may surely reckon on that, as Adrian is hugely given to deep potations: one plunge of the stiletto, by an experienced hand, with the addition of a gentle squeeze on the windpipe, to render the measure doubly secure, will make us masters of the keys.”

“But how will you elude the sentinels,” demanded Sir Udo, “near the northern postern.”

“Easily,” answered Pietro, “as this part of the castle being considered quite secure, from the abrupt nature of the rock, on which it is situated, little precaution is deemed necessary; and the postern is never used except in cases of ex-

treme urgency: therefore, only one soldier is stationed there, and we can easily manage him in case of necessity.”

“ Yet” replied Sir Udo, “ though your reward will certainly be great, if success attends your efforts, I will by no means consent, that you should run useless danger. What if your evil genius deserts you, and Adrian be enjoined to do penance, and abstain from his favourite sin? You might both, mercurial as you are, be compelled to indulge in that deep and lasting sleep, which you propose for him.”

“ Oh! never fear, Sir Knight, faint heart never won fair lady; besides, Adrian is something like the jolly monks, they will preach enough about mortifying the lusts, and the necessity, and beauty of abstinence; but they will never follow their own precepts, as long as the bowl is filled. Besides your old friend Bertoldo is not very rigorous, and we will promise Adrian ready absolution from him, should he require it: moreover, if we are noticed,

our character as pilgrims will be sufficient protection; and it is our intention to declare, that we shall proceed at an early hour on the following morning, therefore our movements will not excite attention, and we shall be enabled to carry on our plans undiscovered."

"Now in regard to the remaining part of the enterprise" observed Sir Udo, "do you think that it will be practicable for the troops to climb up the steep and dangerous precipice, on the northern side? Even in open day it appears formidable, how much more difficult will it then be, in the uncertain light of the night. As the wicket will be open for your departure in the morning, would it not be more feasible to make the attempt, by a silent and rapid advance on the southern face?"

"By no means," replied Pietro, "for it would be necessary to scale numerous and difficult outworks, where strong guards are stationed, before the party could reach the main ramparts; whilst

on the northern face, we have only the dangers of the ascent to overcome. Our best hope is certainly on that side."

"You appear to treat the obstacle lightly," said Sir Udo, "yet the rock appears almost perpendicular. On what do you ground your chance of success?"

"I cannot imagine the ascent insurmountable, since I have frequently seen goats leap from rock to rock, and standing perfectly secure on those parts, which seem perpendicular to those looking up from the low grounds; besides, the greater part is covered by strong shrubs, which will materially assist our confederates in their arduous efforts, and where the reward is proportioned to the danger, gallant spirits will never hesitate. Besides you may employ your Italian free bands, many of whom have passed their lives, being natives of the alps, in ascending and descending those perilous and lofty mountains, in chase of the chamois; and you will not presume to compare those mag-

nificent regions, with these diminutive hills.”

Sir Udo was inwardly delighted, that his trusty retainers had of themselves proposed the very arrangement, which he had determined to follow; for being an accurate observer of human nature, he well knew, that men are more readily induced to pursue with ardour, the emanations of their own minds; and that the numerous difficulties, which in the proposal of another, would appear as insuperable objections, then sink into insignificance. Attributing therefore all the merit, to their superior judgment, he gave a willing assent to such clear and convincing arguments, and issued the necessary directions for preparing a chosen body to accompany them. The wily Italian, well aware of the unrelenting disposition of his master, and being unwilling to undertake such a delicate commission, without the most express orders, finally demanded, “Should the garrison prove stronger, than report

and private information lead us to believe, and should the resistance consequently be greater than we expect, and prevent us carrying off the Countess alive, what course are we then to pursue?"

The countenance of Sir Udo assumed for an instant, a diabolical expression, indicative of the fierce struggle between love and revenge, and compressing his lips, until the blood flowed, he replied in a scarcely audible tone, "Let her be mine, dead or alive." As the appearance of a numerous corps of troops along the most frequented routes, might create alarm and suspicion, it was resolved to pursue a more circuitous course, which led through the forests, where they might advance unperceived.

Although Sir Udo had apparently exhibited an anxious desire to live on terms of friendship with his rival, still Sir William, never trusting to these hollow professions of regard, well knowing the true nature of the Baron's disposition, had

left a strong garrison under the able guidance of Sir Henry of Mulhdorf. An accident however defeated the well planned design of the vindictive and treacherous Sir Udo.

The two Pilgrims had conducted the troops, and stationed them under cover of the forest, within a short distance of the castle, where they were to remain in concealment, until the appointed hour of the attack. Having given the final orders, they then pursued their way to Altenburg by a narrow path that ran along the edge of a precipice. As they were engaged in earnest conversation on their projected enterprise, the foot of Pietro slipped, in consequence of some rain having fallen, and he would have been inevitably precipitated into the abyss below, had he not been arrested in his rapid descent, by one of the numerous shrubs, which grew on the rock. His pilgrim's robe was however torn open, and fortunately displayed his polished breastplate to the enquiring

eyes of an intelligent boy, who was attending the goats of the castle, and who, on observing the Pilgrims advancing towards him, had cautiously concealed himself under a thick bush, determining to observe their motions; for it was unusual for any persons, except those attached to the garrison, to frequent this part, being entirely remote from the usual routes. Pietro quickly readjusted his robe, and uttering curses, instead of thanks for his lucky escape, regained the path, and joined his companion, who congratulated him on his good fortune, observing, "It is well no person observed your polished under-garments."

Pietro coolly replied, "It would have been perfectly immaterial, as I should have just stuck my dagger into him, and hurled him into the black pool below, as food for the fish."

The poor boy, however ignorant of their language, (for they conversed in their native tongue), yet experienced all the

horrors of agonizing suspense, and his heart almost died within him through fear of detection, as the menancing tones of Pietro's voice struck on his affrighted ear; but happily he escaped their notice, although they threw their eagle glances around. The Pilgrims soon reached the gate of the castle, and readily obtained the shelter and hospitality which they demanded. Hitherto every thing had proceeded according to their expectations, and they began to entertain confident hopes of success, as they had been summoned to the presence of the Lady Bertha, and had there enjoyed the wished for opportunity of minutely observing the northern defences, of which the windows of Bertha's apartment commanded a full view. On being questioned as to the objects of their journey, they asserted, that they were then on their route to Cologne, to visit an uncle, who held a high situation in the Elector's Court, and whilst Massaniello gave a pleasing narrative of some

of the events, which had happened to them in the Holy Land, Pietro retired a few paces to the window, apparently absorbed in his pious meditations, but in reality scrutinising every object, which might enlighten him in regard to their enterprise. Bertha at length dismissed them, giving orders at the same time to an attendant, to supply refreshment in the room appropriated to their use.

In the mean time, as the evening closed, Ubald arrived, and immediately acquainted Sir Henry with the observations he had made, regarding one of the Pilgrims. Struck with this suspicious circumstance, the Governor demanded of the boy, whether he had mentioned the subject to any other individual; on his replying in the negative, Sir Henry ordered him to remain in his apartment, and to preserve strict silence; and then accompanied by some of his stoutest retainers, he proceeded to the Pilgrims' room, where seizing the two culprits, he tore off their disguise, and

discovered their armour. They were instantly secured with strong chains, and thrown into a dungeon. The prudent Governor having quietly assembled the garrison, made every arrangement necessary to prevent surprise; posting a strong body of troops on the northern face, and keeping a numerous corps in a central situation as a reserve, in order to reinforce any part which might be seriously threatened: he then, with the assistance of some of his principal officers, commenced a strict examination of the culprits; but no menaces, no offers of reward, not even the promise of liberty and life, had any effect on their minds. Sir Henry demanded, "If in truth you are what your dress announces, why clothe yourselves in armour, as hospitality and protection are always extended to men of your holy profession."

"That is certainly true," replied they, "in regard to a Christian country, but as our pilgrimage has principally been performed in a foreign land, where the Christian faith,

instead of protecting, decidedly endangers the life of the professor, it is usual for men of our class to travel well armed."

Sir Henry replied; "You surely have had time to divest yourself of your military garb, since your return from the Holy Land; and you must be aware, that it necessarily creates suspicion."

"It may cause alarm," Massaniello admitted, "in a peasant's hut, but two armed men, however hostile their intentions may be, can scarcely endanger such a garrison as this."

"But these individuals," replied Sir Henry, "though unable to effect much mischief by their own means, may be connected with others, both willing and able to carry their views into execution."

The Pilgrims smiled, and said, "Unless our supposed friends drop from the clouds, they cannot expect to enter a castle so strongly situated as this, so well garrisoned, and so vigilantly guarded as it is. But if your fears for your safety are so lively,

and you tremble at the fancied power of two holy men, why not dismiss us at once? And since you refuse us the common rights of hospitality, why add harshness and cruelty to your treatment? Remember, however, you entail a fearful responsibility on yourself; if you respect not our claims to protection, at least dread the thunders of the church. Our zeal in the cause of religion, has received the warm praise of the Holy Father himself, and we are the bearers of important communications from him, to the powerful Archbishop of Cologne.”

In those days, the threat of being exposed to the thunders of the Vatican, caused the stoutest heart to tremble, and so superstitious were the minds of men, and so great the power of an artful priesthood, that the bare threat of excommunication, frequently made the most powerful Emperors kneel in abject submission at the feet of the despotic ruler of the church; and owning his supremacy, resign their

crowns into his hands, which could only again be obtained, by implicit obedience to his imperious demands.

In the present instance, the shaft was levelled in vain, since Sir Henry feared not the displeasure of the formidable head of the church, as the Lord of Altenburg was in high favor at the Court of Rome, having strenuously supported the interests of the Pope on many recent occasions; and he therefore replied to the Pilgrims: “You need feel no concern about my conscience, as it will take care of itself; and I have no doubt of obtaining absolution for all my sins:—but to the point:—since you declare yourselves such innocent men, how happens it, that you so cautiously concealed your armour?” Both prisoners appeared slightly confused at this question, and paused for a moment, when Pietro declared, “There was no attempt at concealment, as the dresses were fastened in the usual way.” This falsehood was instantly exposed, as great

care had evidently been used, to prevent a sudden exposure. Sir Henry then said, "If you candidly confess the object of your visit, your lives shall be spared, but if on the contrary, you obstinately refuse to divulge your plans, death shall be the reward of your temerity. I will give you two hours to consider my proposal. — Guards, remove the prisoners."

CHAPTER VIII.

PIETRO, and his companion in adversity, retained their composure to the last, for accustomed from their early youth, to scenes of peril and bloodshed, they were not easily unnerved at the prospect of death, which they had so often braved in the field, and on first undertaking this perilous adventure, they had resolutely prepared themselves either to succeed, and reap a glorious reward, or bravely perish in the attempt: but when first the guard seized them, and tore off their disguise, they were perfectly at a loss to comprehend what could have excited suspicion. Pietro, well accustomed to weigh all circumstances in his mind, remembered that at the moment he was nearly precipi-

tated into the abyss, he had observed goats browsing in the immediate vicinity, and knew that it was customary to send a boy with them; but then in the sharp and inquisitive glance, which he had hastily cast around, he had discovered no sign of an individual, not even the trace of a foot-step, for the rain which had moistened the ground, would naturally have occasioned the print to remain, had any person passed in that direction, (the fact is, that Ubald had crossed the path, and taken his station under the bush before the rain commenced), he, therefore, finding it impossible to solve the mystery, resolved to await the event with fortitude. On retiring from the examination, the prisoners were much disappointed, on finding that they were to be separately confined.

When first discovered, they had both determined to preserve their secret to the last, and run the chapter of accidents; for even if they consented to reveal their plan, they could expect (despite the solemn pro-

mise) but little mercy : and circumstances might occur to defeat the intentions of their confederates, without the garrison being aware of their approach ; in which event they would be dismissed early on the following morning, with every mark of respect.

Midnight arrived, when they were again summoned before Sir Henry, and separately examined, but without any favorable result ; for although artful questions were proposed purposely to mislead them, they still persisted in the same story, and in their denial of all sinister intentions.

Every precautionary measure, which prudence could dictate, was adopted ; the different posts at the lofty watch-towers were occupied by men of approved trust, whilst the governor himself, not that he apprehended an attack from that quarter, remained on the northern front at the head of a strong division.

In the mean time, the confederates had commenced their march, and approach-

ing the foot of the hill at the appointed hour, succeeded, after incredible exertions, in surmounting the difficulties opposed to them, though at the expence of several lives; and they had just reached the top, when one of their number missing his grasp of a shrub, was precipitated down the precipice, having uttered a cry at the first alarm. The garrison was instantly on the alert; lights were shewn in every quarter, and the enemy being furiously assailed, were hurried down the frightful depth, and few lived to tell the tale of their escape. A strong detachment was dispatched from the castle to pursue the fugitives, and on arriving at the bottom of the hill, they witnessed a melancholy spectacle, for the bodies of the dead and the dying were dreadfully mutilated. A few of the survivors were made prisoners, and being carried to the dungeons, related the whole extent of the atrocious design. They detailed the dangers they had encountered in the ascent, but said that their

courage had been supported by the hopes of the rich plunder which had been promised them.

The noise which this event occasioned, struck on the ears of the pilgrims, as the sentence of death and their fate was soon determined, for they were led out to immediate execution, and their bodies were suspended over the northern wall, as a warning to all false miscreants. As soon as the dawn appeared, parties were dispatched to reconnoitre the country, but they soon returned with the information, that the enemy had entirely retreated. Sir Henry, therefore, contented himself with establishing a strong guard on the northern face, and issued immediate orders for scarping down such parts of the rock, as facilitated the advance of an enemy, and for rooting out all the shrubs.

The lovely Bertha was deeply affected at this iniquitous attempt, and dreading the implacable disposition of the vindictive Sir Udo, whose hatred would be aug-

mented, rather than softened, by its failure, she abandoned herself to despair, and passed her nights in wretchedness, fancying an enemy in every passing shadow, and starting from her restless couch, as the wind rushed along the extensive corridors. But her confidence was in some measure renewed by the return of her gallant husband.

The Count of Altenburg, on being apprised of all the circumstances, decided on publicly challenging the infamous Sir Udo, to mortal combat, and instantly dispatched Sir Henry of Muhldorf with his defiance. Sir Udo, strenuously asserting his total ignorance of the attack, and disclaiming all participation in it, observed; "If Sir William is not satisfied with this denial, I am ready as a true Knight to meet him in the lists." Sir Henry, in reply, stated, "That his orders were peremptory; that he had full authority to make the necessary arrangements, and requested Sir Udo to name a Knight to meet him on the subject."

Sir Udo, with every affectation of regret, replied, "Permit me to lament the necessity of such a measure, and again call your notice to the fact, that the affair must have been undertaken by freebooters, as no man of note appears to have headed the enterprise; and you will readily acknowledge, that if, as Sir William presumes, the object was to carry off the Countess, I certainly should not have entrusted another with the delicate commission."

Sir Henry, admitting the plausibility of this argument, declared, "It is not for me to decide on the justice of the accusation, the sword will determine that point."

Sir Udo answered, "Be it so, and you may inform the Count, that my good arm will always be ready to defend my character from all injurious aspersions. In the mean time, I will consult with my friends, and be assured, Sir Henry, that the preliminaries shall be settled with the least possible delay."

At this period the Abbot Bertoldo, and

the Count of Regensburg, were guests of Sir Udo; to them he naturally imparted the object of Sir Henry's visit, asserting, however, that the men had acted without his orders, and were probably induced to make the attempt in hopes of sharing the rich booty, which Sir William was generally reported to have accumulated: "Perhaps," he also added, "aware of my former passion for the Countess Bertha, and imagining that the impression of her beauty had not entirely faded from my heart, they considered that in presenting her to me, I should be induced to protect them in the enjoyment of their spoils." This specious reasoning did not for an instant impose on his friends, but they politely admitted the truth of the excuse. Sir Udo himself did not expect to deceive them with the idea of his innocence, but artfully related the circumstance to excite their cupidity; and the golden bait amply succeeded: for Sir Lutold, after exchanging looks with the Abbot, declared, "I cannot express,

Sir Udo, in terms sufficiently forcible, my indignation at the insult offered to your honour, and feeling for your reputation, I will as a true Knight aid you in an immediate attack on Altenburg."

The pious Abbot assured him, "Although I am unwilling to enter into, or encourage the carnal disputes of the laity, as my duty is to preach peace to men, yet in the present instance, where the dignity of the church has been attacked in the person of two of its pious servants, I shall not hesitate in accompanying you on such a glorious mission."

Sir Udo replied with becoming gravity, "I consider, my noble friends, the purity of your motives as highly honourable to you, and most willingly accept your disinterested offers of aid, but although a sense of honour has dictated your determination, yet, as the Count possesses great wealth, I must insist on the money being divided into three equal shares; claiming also the disposal of the Countess for myself;

to the remainder of the spoil, I abandon all claim." This arrangement met with the perfect approbation of all parties.

As Altenburg was remarkably strong, and would require a regular and expensive siege to reduce it, the trio determined to attempt its capture by surprise; and to favor this measure, and throw the Count off his guard, Sir Lutold was commissioned ostensibly to concert with Sir Henry on the terms of meeting, but in reality, to obtain an accurate survey of the defences of the castle.

The affair was speedily settled, and it was decided, that each party should be attended by an equal number of retainers; that the lists should be formed, and placed under the direction of one of the neighbouring Barons of distinguished reputation, whoshould also be empowered to decide on all points connected with the contest. A spot was selected in the immediate vicinity of Altenburg, by the artful suggestion of Sir Lutold, by which means he was ena-

bled fully to examine its outward approaches.

The worthy trio, having by this prompt display of readiness to give Sir William the satisfaction which he demanded, lulled him into a fatal security, the prudent and strict precautions adopted to secure the safety of the castle, were in a great degree relaxed.

The fatal night was fixed, and the troops being divided into three bodies, each commanded by its own chief, marched at the appointed hour to the walls, when success attended their efforts, the surprise being complete. The contest however was desperate, and Sir William had nearly succeeded in driving back the division of Udo, and of the Abbot, when Sir Lutold, having triumphed over all resistance, came to the assistance of his comrades, at the moment when the two rivals were furiously engaged with each other; but the combat was short, as Sir William dashed him to the earth with one blow of his battle axe,

and the infamous Sir Udo lost, even in the arms of victory, his long-desired prey. The gallant Count, after performing prodigies of valour, fell under the repeated attacks of his bloody assassins; and his body being found, after the contest, still warm, and the spirit ready to wing its flight, the ruthless Lutold plunged his dagger into his heart.

His Squire, however, succeeded in escaping from the bloody scene, with his only son Hugo; but as years rolled on, and no further accounts were received of the fugitives, it was generally imagined that they had experienced an untimely death. The fate of the lovely Bertha was never ascertained.

The base and vindictive Sir Udo was buried with great pomp, as a martyr in the cause of the church; and the remains of the pious pilgrims were attended to the grave by a numerous body of monks and zealots; whilst an account of the proceedings, with part of the spoil, was de-

spatched to Rome, and the violence and injustice of this infamous deed were covered with the imposing mantle of religion.

A warm friendship was cemented between Sir Lutold and Bertoldo, and many a base and murderous deed was planned and executed by these worthies with success, as the riches found at Altenburgh enabled them to support numerous forces in Italy, to which country they immediately marched, Sir Lutold being anxious to escape the publicity of this transaction.

CHAPTER IX.

SIR ERNEST, on rising from the Baron's table, had received some important information, which obliged him instantly to repair to Grunengen, where he was detained for several days, which caused him infinite regret, particularly as he feared that his cold and abstracted behaviour at dinner, and his abrupt departure immediately after, might have confirmed Matilda in the idea, that he was displeased with her observations, and had purposely avoided joining her in the garden, according to his usual practice; however, he determined to hasten to Greiffen, at the earliest possible period, and endeavour to banish these reflections, if they existed on her mind, by shortly explaining the real cause of his sudden departure.

Having long entertained suspicions of Sir Lutold's conduct, he had resolved to withdraw the veil of mystery with which he continued to envelop his designs, and in consequence, employed an active agent in whom he could confide, to watch the proceedings of the Count, and soon learnt sufficient to confirm him in the belief that, if Sir Lutold was not the actual leader, he nevertheless participated in the rich advantages derived from the shameful exactions on the commerce of the country. Armed with this information, he was the more anxious to unmask this formidable man, as he was conscious that he possessed those unrivalled qualities, and outward perfections of body, sufficient to captivate the heart of a young and inexperienced female; and he had observed, with pain, the influence which he apparently possessed over the feelings of Matilda, and the delight her animated countenance expressed, as she listened in silent attention to his superior powers of pleas-

ing. But, fearful of awakening her resentment by introducing the subject at too early a period, he prudently determined to regain her favour before he presumed to offer his opinion.

After paying his respects to Sir Herman, he presented himself to the ladies in the harbour, and immediately perceived, by the warmth of his reception, that his sins were either forgotten or already pardoned.

“My dearest Matilda, I have a long catalogue of faults to confess, and entreat you to be merciful.” And, detailing the reasons of his absence, his excuses were readily received. As the day was fine, Matilda proposed to Emmeline to visit their nurse, who had lately been unwell; and requested Sir Ernest to accompany them, to which he with great satisfaction assented.

The cottage in which she resided, was situated on the opposite face of the hill, at a short distance from a noisy foaming stream, over which they passed on a plank,

supported on two projecting rocks, and then entered a grove of noble trees. It was Sunday! all was tranquil; the sound of the woodman's axe was not heard, and the tolling of the distant church-bell alone broke on the silence of the scene.

Matilda remarked "that it was delightful to contemplate the works of Nature: observe this forest, how like a temple it appears! these noble trees around serve as the pillars, whilst their numerous branches uniting together form the green-vaulted roof. All, from the huge moss-clad oak there, to the little lilly of the valley springing under our feet, declare the existence of our Creator. It is an instructive study to view the various trees, shrubs, and plants, with their manifold beauty and usefulness!"

"Yes," replied Sir Earnest, "the wood is indeed a book, in every leaf of which you may read the wisdom and goodness of God."

After passing through the grove, they

soon arrived at the garden gate, and were much pleased with the order and neatness which reigned around. The cottage itself was embosomed in fruit trees, resplendent with their rich blossoms. The good dame arose to receive and welcome them with homely cordiality, and regretted that the season was not sufficiently advanced to enable her to present them with fruit, but proposed to gather a bouquet of the early flowers, which she cultivated with great success. On Matilda inquiring into the cause of her illness, she replied, "My rest has been much disturbed of late, by several unlucky omens, which speak of coming evil: it was only last night that the raven croaked from yon old oak, and our cow died this morning; and last Thursday the crows flew one by one over the garden, and all our tulips were found torn to shreds in the evening."

Matilda interrupted the good woman in her catalogue of grievances, by reminding her, "Your cow had been long in

a declining state, and the tempest on Thursday evening will account, by natural causes, for the destruction of your tulips."

"Well, well," replied Dorothy, "the young are always ready to pass these signs unheeded by; but, when you arrive at my age, you will learn that the owl never hoots, nor the raven croaks in vain: besides, my husband (our Lady of Ensiddlin bless his soul), on returning by the Abbey of Hildesheim on Friday last, was much alarmed on seeing a tall figure in white, seated near the fountain, exactly in the spot where the late Abbess had been accustomed to sit, for the purpose of enjoying the shade during the heat of summer."

Matilda here interrupted her and said, "But surely, dear nurse, you do not believe in these supernatural appearances: if the late Abbess was so fond of the spot, why may not some other individual have felt the same preference? or perhaps some"—

"Oh, my Lady, you talk so fast, but

had you only waited for the conclusion of the tale you would think very differently: it is an awful sight to view these appearances, as they are invariably the forerunners of some great calamity. But where was I? My husband determined"—

"No, good nurse," Matilda replied, "you were speaking of the Abbess, but I will not interrupt you again."

"Ah, you were always so considerate, dear child. Well, the Abbess always retired to this spot because it was so overshadowed with plane trees, and so fit for contemplation. Well, my husband, nothing daunted, approached, when the figure rose gradually to such an uncommon height, that my poor man became terrified, and fled from the spot."

Sir Ernest said, "Because your husband was alarmed, is that a proof that the figure belonged to other worlds?"

"O yes," replied Dorothy, "nothing earthly, Sir Knight, could frighten my Hildebrand."

“ But has this vision been observed by others ? ”

“ Oh, dear ! yes, by several ; it was only last night that Miller Clement was nearly frightened out of his senses by the fearful object : not thinking of any harm, he came suddenly by the fountain and saw the face of the phantom,—a nose like a mountain, a mouth like a cavern, and large scarlet eyes.”

“ But, good nurse,” observed Sir Ernest, “ does the ghost vary its appearance ? it is to be hoped so, otherwise the description is not very complimentary to the late Abbess.”

“ Our Lady protect us from the consequences of such impiety, Sir Knight : it is not a subject to be treated with derision.”

“ Pardon, good nurse,” replied Sir Ernest, “ I will not offend the Abbess with the scarlet eyes again : it was perhaps the trick of some tender maiden, who, expecting to meet her lover, wished to drive all intruders away. But did not the Miller speak to it ? ”

“Thousand devils! no, the poor man fell into a fainting fit, and was discovered by the abbey porter, who fortunately came to draw some water. Poor Clement has been in a nervous state ever since, and will not go there again in a hurry. But it was a foolish thing to pass an Abbey in the dark.”

Sir Ernest endeavoured to combat these ideas, engendered by gross superstition, and remarked, “The ceremony of the initiation of Knights is very solemn: they are obliged to pass several nights in a church or chapel, in prayer, where they confess their sins and receive the sacraments, their minds must consequently be predisposed to receive impressions; yet it is singular, that although dwelling for nights in the very land of spirits, they never meet with these unearthly objects.”

Dame Dorothy answered, “It is by no means singular, as the prayers protect the candidates; for it is well known, that when a house is haunted, the priest can exorcise the spirits by prayer; besides, the va-

rious well-authenticated histories of supernatural appearances, always speak of the spirits as appearing outside the church; and perhaps if the knights performed their ceremonies without, in lieu of the interior, they might have a different tale to tell."

Sir Ernest scarcely restraining his laughter, observed, "That at part of the ceremony, the candidates were clothed in white robes, as emblems of the purity of manners required by the laws of chivalry; and that the worthy miller, as well as Hildebrand, might easily have mistaken in the dusk of the evening, some individual preparing for the initiation, for a figure in a female garb."

Dorothy highly offended at this ridiculous supposition, declared with great warmth, "My husband, Sir Knight, knows how to distinguish a woman from a man, as well as any Baron in the land."

Matilda, now rising to depart, said, "Be assured, dear nurse, should the wandering spirit (if such it be) venture to molest you,

I will immediately request my father's confessor to lay it: but I venture to promise, there will be no occasion for the pious monk's assistance."

Sir Ernest observed, "It is much to be lamented, that these superstitious feelings so pervade the land; but whilst the mass of people remain so buried in ignorance, there is but slight probability that any arguments will shake their belief, until education paving the way for the reception of the light of truth, shall pierce the veil, and dispel the darkness which clouds their understanding, and holds their minds in firm subjection."

On their return home, the sisters stopped on the rustic bridge, to admire the fine view which it commanded: the waterfall in particular attracted their attention, and excited their utmost admiration: for as the snow had been melted by the sun, the torrent rushed with unusual violence over the broken rocks, and leapt from mass to mass, foaming and roaring, until at length

it exhausted its fury down the precipitous descent, and bubbling and murmuring, meandered over the moss-covered stones. A little lower down in the valley, a stag was reflecting his stately and elegant form on the silver bosom of the tranquil stream. The dark groups of fir, which clothed the sides of the mountain, greatly heightened the effect of the landscape, and the ladies were expressing their approbation, when the railing against which Matilda was leaning, suddenly gave way, with a loud crash, and she would inevitably have been hurled to the depth below, had not Sir Ernest, with surprising quickness and dexterity, arrested her fall; but he was himself nearly perishing in the attempt; for the sudden jerk of Matilda's weight threw him off his balance, and he was only saved by grasping the post which had supported the railing.

Emmeline, in the moment of alarm, uttered a faint shriek, and stood trembling with parted lips and extended arms, the

picture of terror. All was silent for some moments, and Matilda appeared scarcely conscious of her providential escape ; but when she recovered from the stunning shock, gently disengaging herself from the arms of Sir Ernest, the look of speaking eloquence which, whilst offering up a silent prayer, she glanced on her deliverer, spoke more than words could express her sense of the obligation.

Deep feeling is often mute, and joy is frequently accompanied by sadness:—the sisters appeared abstracted in thought, whilst the warm tears trickled down their pallid cheeks. Matilda supported her trembling steps on the arm of her preserver, but little conversation passed on her return to the castle, where Sir Ernest silently raising her delicate hand to his lips, imprinted a fervent kiss, and bid her a tender adieu.

When arrived in the privacy of their own chamber, nature long restrained, at length relieved their surcharged feelings;

and entwining their arms round each other, the sisters mingled their tears together. Ah! how sweet, how pure and innocent are the feelings and affections of youth; how generously, how warmly and sincerely do we then feel, and share the pleasures and disappointments of each other; weep with the afflicted, and rejoice with the happy and fortunate:—pity that it so soon passes away, and leaves but the shadow of happiness behind:—for as we advance in life, the heart too often becomes callous, cold, and insincere, and is embittered by grief, care, ambition, and a long catalogue of deadly passions.

Sir Ernest had encountered the Baron immediately on parting with the sisters, and at his particular request, accompanied him to the southern face of the castle, where labourers were engaged in throwing up some new works for the defence of that part, which was most exposed to the attacks of an enemy. Sir Herman detailed the nature and object of his plan, but his

companion was either so dull of apprehension, or his own power of explanation so defective, that he began to doubt, whether his views of these improvements were founded on justice, as he had great reliance on the clear and sound opinions of Sir Ernest in such matters.

“ I perceive you do not coincide in opinion with me, Sir Knight, on the utility of these works, but indeed it is difficult to judge correctly in their present early state ; when they are more advanced, perhaps you will favor me with your candid sentiments ?

Sir Ernest, recalled as if from a dream, replied, after a short pause, “ Surpassing lovely indeed ! ” The Baron regarded him with astonishment, but his immediate presence being required elsewhere, he said on retiring, “ I hope, my dear Ernest, you will descend to prose the next time we examine the works together ; and remember, they belong not to nature’s fairest

creation, but to a graver subject, viz.—fortification.”

The youthful knight was glad to be left to his own meditations, for he had not understood one word, nor even regarded the works, for his thoughts were all fixed on that rustic bridge, and the lovely form which he had pressed to his manly bosom; and contrasting his present feelings with those which had previously inspired his regard for Matilda, the truth flashed on his excited imagination, that the scene of the bridge, had changed the affectionate sentiments of brotherly love, into a much warmer passion. Many were the dreams of ideal happiness, which in the first glow of youthful ardour, danced before his delighted fancy. All was brilliant, no clouds appeared to obscure the fair vision of anticipated delight.

How treacherously, yet how facinatingly does youthful hope paint our future prospects; she gilds every thing she touches,

and though she often tells a flattering tale, yet we still hug the dear deluder to our bosom, and forgetting her frequent deceptions, fondly expect to grasp the ever-flying shadow. But life would be a wretched blank, without this invigorating feeling; it enables us to bear up against all the ills which assail us : in sickness, when the body is exhausted with suffering, the mind is cheered with the expectation of returning health : the desperate gamester, in full reliance that capricious fortune will smile on his final attempt, madly stakes the last ducat, which was intended for the support of his starving family : the cold and selfish coquette, even in the expiring rags of faded beauty, clings with fondness to the delusive hope of securing a brilliant conquest : the soldier, worn out with fatigue, and the severe privations of a long siege, still looks with confidence for succour : the sailor, driven by baffling and contrary winds from his homeward course, day after day looks forward with anxious

confidence for that happy change, which shall quickly waft his gallant vessel to its destined port.

If this passion, when fixed only on worldly objects, exerts such a strong influence over our minds, how much more powerful does it become, when supported by a firm reliance on that mighty and benignant power, which not only creates this all inspiring sentiment, but is also able to accomplish all our future hopes !

CHAPTER X.

MATILDA and Emmeline were seated in their shady arbour, enjoying the freshness of the evening air, when Sir Ernest approached them: it was the first time of their meeting since he had been the fortunate instrument, in the hands of Providence, of saving her life. Previous to this occurrence, Matilda, on seeing him enter the garden, had frequently hastened with light heart, and animated countenance to receive him; but now there was a restlessness in her manner, and a strange excitement in her feelings; her cheek and neck were suffused with a crimson flush, her pulse beat rapidly, her bosom heaved, and she almost shrank from the touch of his offered hand.

Were these novel emotions excited by a sense of the magnitude of the service he had performed? the remembrance was indeed indelibly impressed on her grateful heart, but the former liveliness of her conduct had softened into a bashful timidity, and strong suspicions arose in her mind, that her sisterly affection had altered its character. As the Knight raised her hand to his lips, Matilda said "I am at a loss for words, Sir Ernest, to express how deeply I feel indebted to you for the preservation of my life; my heart has felt quite oppressed with the sense of the obligation, and I have panted for the opportunity of expressing my sincere thanks, but now that the moment has actually arrived, the power of clothing my thoughts in appropriate language is denied, but your own generous feelings will suggest to you all that my grateful heart would express."

"My dearest Matilda," replied Sir Ernest, "the delight I have experienced, in having accidentally preserved your life,

has repaid me ten thousand times, and I shall ever consider it as one of the happiest moments of my life: but why this formal address? why magnify the importance of my services so much? are you of that proud character and disposition, that you conceive a cold antipathy towards the person from whom you have received a favor? I fear, instead of warming it has frozen the current of your blood; hitherto it has been "Ernest," "dear Ernest" but now it is "*Sir Ernest*," next it will be, the "Baron of Grunengen; well," men have certainly warmer hearts than women, for since the bridge affair, my affection, instead of being diminished, has rather increased tenfold: no brother can love you more than I do." This was uttered with such warmth, that Matilda's confusion was still more excited, as she met the glance of his expressive eyes, and coloring deeply she replied, "Indeed dear Ernest, you are not so generous as usual, for I am confident that you are sensible, that the heart often feels more than

the tongue can express, and that silence frequently conveys more meaning than words; and if there was any coldness or formality in my expressions, it arose rather from accident than intention."

"I did but jest, dearest Matilda," replied the Knight, "you are indeed all that is amiable; and the simple profession of your thanks is of more value in my estimation than the longest and warmest declarations of gratitude from another."

Matilda had resumed her embroidery, and soon recovered her serenity, when Emmeline with much gravity said, "Sir Ernest of Grunengen is much to be pitied, since the shock his nerves received on a recent occasion, seems to have impaired not only his memory but his vision; for not one look has he cast, and not one syllable has he condescended to address to such a simple maiden as I am: I believe Knights formerly professed a high regard for the fair sex, and considered it a duty to treat them with gallantry and polite-

ness; but these turbulent times, and constant wars, have certainly tended to harden their hearts."

"My pretty sister," Sir Ernest said, "is so kind and gentle, that my most prudent course will be at once to confess my errors, and throw myself on her mercy."

"As you appear so penitent," said Emeline, "I must pardon you, on the condition of future good behaviour; but beware of the second offence, since you will not find me so amiable and forgiving as my sister."

Matilda, with a smile, reminded Sir Ernest of the promised songs of the Troubadours, as she was anxious to see them before their intended visit to Ustar, and hoped that he would be of their party there.

Sir Ernest replied, "I shall present them with much pleasure on their arrival, as I am dying to hear you sing them; and nothing shall prevent me accompanying you to Sir Frederick's. Report says, that the party will be very numerous, and that

it is arranged as one of the amusements, to hunt the wild boar, which is a very dangerous sport, particularly where ladies are engaged. But if you will appoint me your champion, I will dare the monarch of the forest to mortal combat, should he presume to approach my liege lady."

Matilda, smiling, said, "It is my interest, as truly as it is my inclination, to grant your request; having so recently experienced the benefit of your valuable services."

"I shall indeed be proud in being named your Knight, and will vow to our Lady of Einsedlin to defend you against all attacks, whether of man or beast; and, if necessary, from the thrice-valiant Sir Lutold himself."

Matilda replied, "There will be no occasion for that, dear Ernest; I can assure you there is no danger to be apprehended from that quarter."

"You fill my heart with delight, dearest Matilda," (tenderly taking her hand).

And having detailed the recent information he had received regarding the Count's proceedings, he imprinted a kiss, and bid a graceful adieu to the ladies. Emmeline at the same time arose to attend her mother.

Matilda was arranging a wreath of the choice flowers of the season, to decorate her hair, when a hasty step startled her, and on turning round she beheld Sir Ernest, and laughing, demanded, "What has occasioned your sudden return? I imagined women only were permitted to be fickle: can lordly and stern man so soon change his decided purpose?"

"Ah! dearest Matilda, you will assuredly pardon my unexpected appearance, although it may at the moment excite your surprise, when you ascertain the real cause. I have just received some authentic information from Rome, where the Pope has expressed himself in strong terms regarding the present unsettled

state of Germany, in consequence of the interregnum; and has positively declared that, if the College of Vienna does not at once unanimously elect an Emperor, he will himself appoint one. I trust this happy news affords you infinite satisfaction."

"I believe you are really bewildered," she replied, smiling, "since you so frequently entertain me with politics. What relation have I to the Pope and the Electoral college? does not my presence inspire you with more interesting topics? or perhaps you are desirous of astonishing me with the surprising accuracy with which you repeat the historical lesson you have just learnt by heart? But men are all the same, perfect egotists, only willing to converse on the subject which most interests themselves. Suppose I entertain you with a critical dissertation on female dress in return for your agreeable information: will you feel interest on such a subject?"

Men are as little conversant with female costume, as females are with war and political events."

" Pardon, dearest Matilda, pardon for the unintentional offence. I had indeed imagined that, as your father has such a deep stake in the issue of these affairs, it would afford you great pleasure to present him with the satisfactory details."

" Your artifice in shielding yourself under my father's name shall not avail you. I fondly hoped that your precipitate return, particularly when I observed your important looks, was occasioned by the sudden arrival of the long-promised Troubadours' song, or something of equal consequence. Wasever maiden circumstanced as I am? first comes the polished Sir Lutold, with his elegant compliments and winning smiles; yet, with all his art, a look sometimes escapes him which makes one tremble with fear: (the youth's solemn countenance began to relax, and brighten into smiles, at this last observation:) then

appears the mighty Count Moritz, who considers a silly girl as part of the furniture of the house, and beneath his notice, and scarcely capable of comprehending the depth and eloquence of his conversation: but, thanks to his haughtiness, and overbearing arrogance, my father is deeply offended; and we shall no more be treated with pompous eulogiums on his own merits. And lastly, the young and gallant Sir Ernest; who professes to hold female virtues and talents in such high estimation, and to be such an adept in the art of pleasing, and from whom more favourable conduct might justly be expected; is nevertheless so absorbed by his ruling passion for war and politics, that he mistakes me for a statesman; and is ready to favor me with a full and true account of an Emperor, from Charlemagne down to the present times."

"Ah! Matilda, I shall not give you so much credit in future for genuine attachment to your father, since the humble at-

tempt to please his taste has excited your ridicule, and produced me this severe castigation."

"Receive a friend's advice, dear Ernest, and when next you attempt to make a favourable impression on a lady's heart, consult her fancy and inclinations, rather than her father's pursuits; and you will assuredly gain much more success, by dissertations on light and playful subjects, which are more congenial to her mind, than on war and politics: that you may not be taken quite unprepared, I shall leave you to learn your new lesson, and till you are perfect, adieu:" and laughing she tripped lightly away.

Sir Ernest had returned with the pleasing expectation of obtaining the grateful thanks of Matilda, for the important information of which he was the bearer: at first his disappointment was painful, and her manner at receiving the news, almost excited his displeasure; but the mock gravity with which she delivered her sen-

timents, and particularly the observations regarding Sir Lutold, soon restored his good humour, and dissipated all his fears regarding the impression the Count had made on her heart, for the last time he had ventured seriously to caution her on this subject, she had descanted so much on his agreeable and engaging manners and conversation, and his marked attention and respect for the female dignity, that he feared lest this evident predisposition to admire, might create imperceptibly a warmer feeling in her heart; this idea had embittered his happiness, and prompted him to obtain that accurate information which enabled him to exhibit the Count of Regensburg to Matilda in his natural deformity. But her former observations, when he mentioned the subject to her, coupled with the conversation of this day, assured him there was no necessity for further interference, since she evidently regarded him with distrust, and merely enjoyed his society, as she would naturally

do that of any other agreeable guest at the Baron's hospitable board. The veil was withdrawn from his eyes: love triumphed over brotherly affection: and when he reflected on Matilda's confusion at the first moment of their meeting; the bashful timidity, the crimson flush of her cheeks, told to his delighted imagination, the equal progress which the newly awakened passion had made in her gentle bosom: henceforth life wore new charms, and dreams of future happiness filled him with joy.

CHAPTER XI.

AURORA, rising from her saffron couch, ushered in the appointed morning with splendour; and the fresh air of the mountain was perfumed with the fragrance of the wild plants which grew in profusion around; when Matilda, like the presiding goddess of the scene, appeared in all her native loveliness. Her habit was of sylvan green, fastened at the throat with a ruby-brooch, the gift of Sir Ernest; whilst her beautiful brown tresses floated in gay luxuriance over her graceful shoulders, and the drooping feathers of her hat appeared as if designed to shade her face from the powerful rays of the meridian sun; her habit was looped a little below the knee, after the fashion of the Swiss maidens, with

a golden pin, and made a modest display of a foot and leg of perfect symmetry. There was a general burst of admiration from the assembled knights, which heightened the brilliancy of her complexion.

Conducted by Sir Ernest, she mounted her milk-white palfrey, which seemed proud of its lovely burthen; and the cavalcade immediately commenced its march for the castle of Ustar. Parties of pleasure were not arranged in these turbulent times in the same easy manner that obtains at present: numerous guards were necessary to ensure their safety, which gave a warlike character to the procession.

The advanced guard was entrusted to Hugo, who despatched videttes in front and flank wherever the nature of the ground permitted, ordering them to move with great caution, and examine the skirts of the forest accurately, in order to prevent surprise. The centre, composed of his own retainers, was committed to Sir Ernest, with the special charge of the

ladies: whilst Sir Herman himself, leaving the rear-guard under the charge of a confidential officer, superintended the whole. As the party descended the steep road which led into the valley, their helmets and spears glittering in the rays of the morning sun, made an imposing appearance.

Proud of his charge, and impressed with a high sense of the respect due to the female character, Sir Ernest was constant in his attentions, for ever cautioning them to be on their guard, wherever the road became dangerous. Polite to all, yet Matildaseemed to engross his principal regard, his hand was ever busily employed, at one time fixing the reins between her delicate fingers, at another, adjusting some part of her drapery, which the wind too rudely raised. She was, no doubt, conscious of her ignorance in the noble art of guiding her steed, since she received his frequent instructions with evident pleasure, and the patience of the gallant Knight was beyond

all praise, for he was indefatigable in repeating his lessons.

Matilda was eloquent in her praises of the easy action of her new horse, and said, "I am quite surprised that my dear father did not acquaint me with his intention of presenting it to me, but indeed, he is always devising new means to provide me unexpected pleasure—when did he purchase it?"

Sir Ernest smiled and said, "Your noble father, dearest Matilda, saw the animal for the first time this morning, but chance enables me to clear the mystery; a friend having heard you lately express a wish for a noble horse of this colour, spirited, yet gentle in temper, succeeded in obtaining the desired object, and having regularly trained it in the manége, and accustomed it to the sight of the wild boar, fondly hopes, that it will carry its lovely mistress safe in the approaching hunt."

A deep blush suffused the countenance of Matilda; she stole a timid glance at her

companion, and the smile that played about her lips, told that his attention had not been unsatisfactory. "Dear Ernest," she replied, "you are indeed kind, but will my parents permit me to accept of this princely gift?"

"Why not my love," (and they both looked guilty at this simple monosyllable) "I mean, dear Matilda, you have never before objected to receive my friendly offerings; but will you appeal to the Lady Ethelinda?" who, to her daughter's relief, joined them again as the road widened.

"You may venture to receive it my dear."

"It is indeed a very pretty proof of brotherly affection, added Emmeline: and since Matilda appears now to be a perfect horsewoman, perhaps you will have compassion on your youngest sister, and impart some of your valuable instructions to me; for you know I am very timid, and terribly afraid of wild boars." Emmeline was generous and quick-sighted, loved her sister sincerely, and witnessing her confu-

sion, wished by relieving her for a few moments, to give her time to recover.

“My dearest Emmeline,” the youth replied, “I must defer my lesson to a future occasion, since you do not at present require my services, having so long been accustomed to the horse which you now ride: but when you allow me to present another, it will then be my delight, as well as brotherly duty, to improve you in the art of managing him with the greatest facility and grace.”

“You really are much improved in gallantry, dear Ernest; and I trust your excellent example will teach some of our expected visitors at Ustar to shew more courtesy to the fair sex.”

“It depends on the ladies themselves,” replied the Knight. “If women would assume a proper degree of dignity, and not countenance the coarse and brutal manners of some men because they possess the adventitious advantage of high birth and extensive possessions, it would tend

more to soften the manners of the age than any summary regulations, however enforced even by the most powerful princes: and this has been one of the principal benefits derived from the institution of chivalry; which though at first considered as a wild innovation, the result of caprice, yet has been one of the leading causes of the improvement in society; and has given a variety and elegance to the intercourse of life, by associating woman in its ceremonies, and making her an essential part in it: and whilst softening has invigorated the human character,—for since courtesy has been considered one of the most amiable of knightly virtues, and each warrior has devoted himself to the service of his mistress, many noble deeds have been performed under the powerful hope of obtaining female approbation.”

Lady Ethelinda fully coincided in opinion with him, and trusted that woman would again resume the influence which

she had partially lost during the terrible horrors of the long interregnum, since the death of the emperor Frederick: and added, "it is much to be hoped, that the new Emperor may know how to appreciate our use and power in promoting and enlarging the generousities of the human heart, and soothing its ferocity."

"But will not this general intercourse," Matilda observed, "if not restrained within due bounds, destroy that delicacy of feeling, which constitutes one of the principal charms of the female character?"

"It is by no means desirable," replied Sir Ernest, "that woman should enter into the affairs of state, or go beyond that line, which nature and custom prescribe for her, and her presence is only occasionally required, to assist at public ceremonies: but it is in private circles of domestic life, that her influence and example produce the most beneficial results: for since chivalry has revived the becoming respect, and deep and genuine passion for the softer

sex, women have become more sensible of their own importance in the scale of life, and have roused their minds from that lethargy and debasing ignorance, in which they were sunk, and have endeavoured to improve their understandings, by engaging in the pursuits of literature, and have thus been enabled to bend the hitherto untutored minds of their children to the love of letters, and form their stubborn hearts to the practice of virtue: for, good morals and knowledge are generally inseparable.”

“You are become quite a philosopher, my dear Ernest,” said Lady Ethelinda. “What romance have you been reading? You shall certainly be declared the favoured champion of the female sex.”

“I have not only read,” the youth replied, with deep emotion, “but have practically studied the romance of reality, under the roof of my excellent guardian; and if I have derived just notions of the duties of social life,—if my mind and character have been humanized, and my heart has acquired a respect for the more

peaceful virtues which dignify life—it is entirely due to your bright example, my beloved friends; and the sense of the obligation is indelibly fixed here,” (laying his hand on his heart).

“Your own grateful disposition,” Ethelinda replied, “makes you overrate the advantages you have received in our society; the benefit has been mutual, and the period during which you have resided under our care, has been the happiest portion of my life, and I trust, that the short distance which separates us, will not prevent our meeting on the same terms of mutual affection.”

“If you all wish it,” replied Sir Ernest, tenderly regarding Matilda.

“Can you doubt it, dear Ernest,” said Matilda. “Am I not indebted to you for life, and do you not think, that it will ever afford me the greatest pleasure to contribute to your happiness;” their eyes met at the moment, and fell under the consciousness of their newly-awakened passion.

CHAPTER XII.

THE party had advanced in the mean time to the magnificent Abbey of Hildesheim, when Sir Ernest pointed out the well known seat, and the wide-spreading plains, where the Abbess Ounegunda was wont during her life, to enjoy the cool and refreshing shade, and where, according to the superstition of the villagers, she still delighted to resort, to the manifest terror of the ignorant multitude, and especially to the discomfort of the worthy Dorothy's husband. "How deeply it is to be lamented," observed the Knight, "that the minds of men continue to be so enslaved, and that the pure principles of christianity are buried in gross superstition; but whilst unhappily it is the interest of the

clergy to support these abuses, and to confine all knowledge from the grasp of the people, there cannot possibly be a chance of their emerging from this degrading state of mental barbarism, and escaping from the dark mists of error. But these are dangerous subjects of conversation, so near the precincts of the Abbey: although it does at present own me as superior, yet the Pope has lately laid claim to its patronage; and unless the new Emperor is strong enough to support me in my just rights, I must either submit with patient resignation to its loss, or render myself obnoxious to the tender mercies of the church."

"Let me entreat you, dearest Ernest," said Matilda in alarm, "to proceed with caution, and not incur the fearful responsibility of contending against the formidable power of the Pope. Consider, when the interests of the clergy are concerned, how useless it is to resist. The thunders of Rome do indeed strike dismay

into the stoutest hearts, and compel them to submit. If some of our bravest and most powerful emperors, when at the head of numerous armies, have bowed in abject lowliness of spirit to the haughty mandates of their imperious rivals, how can you as a private noble dare to contend against their will? Better yield with a good grace in the first instance to their aggressions, however unjust you may consider them, than be reduced at last to undergo some humiliating penance, for your stubborn offences against the sanctity of the Holy Father: if not from prudential motives, and a proper sense of the Pope's spiritual authority, at least for my sake, desist from all ideas of a vain resistance, which will only entail misery on your friends and yourself."

The youth ventured to take her passive hand, and gently raising it to his lips, declared, "As you express so warm an interest in my welfare, your wishes shall certainly moderate my wrath against this unjust extortion. But it is necessary to

employ artifice against cunning, for if I yield in this point of spiritual concern, the church may wish to claim my broad lands also, for they have descended to me from the same ancestor, in conjunction with the patronage of the Abbey. I am ready to submit to the just authority of the Pope in all spiritual matters, but am bound by no laws human or divine, to obey it in temporal concerns."

"It is not my province to counsel you, dearest Ernest, in such grave affairs, but I can only trust, that your habitual command of yourself, will enable you to regulate your determination, agreeably to the rules of sound judgment and moderation."

The party having refreshed their horses at the Abbey, the trumpets sounded the advance, and the troops resumed their former order of march. The road, after rounding a small conical hill, now led along the margin of the Lake of Greiffen, whose glassy bosom reflected the gay cavalcade, as it passed in military pomp along: it was

about six miles in length, and one in breadth : on one side the shore is flat, or gently rising, whilst a chain of woody hills forms a belt around on the other, and the southern extremity seems almost bounded by the magnificent chain of Alps. Two fine swans, with finely arched necks, sailed majestically over the clear and tranquil surface, whilst a foaming stream on the opposite side gushed down the split rock, on whose rough summit a few dark and huge firs frowned on the lake below.

Midway up the hill, an antique hermitage shewed its modest front: its last inhabitant had been the pious St. Ursula, who, sick of the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and considering the insidious pleasures of society as leading to destruction, and determining to close all the avenues of her soul against external temptation, quitted at the close of the twelfth century the lordly Castle of Frankenburg, to end her days in repentance and prayer, in this humble retreat.

Various were the causes assigned for this singular choice: some attributed it to disappointed love; others, with more probability, to dire necessity: for the Lady Ursula had entered into all the gaieties of her princely father's hospitable mansion, and was celebrated for her wit and vivacity; but she was a coquette, and had disgusted all her former admirers by her cold and selfish vanity, and having no male protector at her father's death, her castle and property were seized by the rapacious Sir Hildebrand of Weinstein, who being the next in succession to the title, compelled her to sign a deed of abdication, on which she retired to the hermitage. Whatever were her former errors, she fully redeemed them by her subsequent virtues, and extensive charities; for Sir Hildebrand faithfully paid her a considerable annuity, and time has spread a halo round her memory. Many have been the visitants to the revered spot, since the mysterious disappearance of the holy dame, who proba-

bly had fallen accidentally into the lake, and was drowned, since the body of an old woman was found shortly after by some fishermen, which some persons ignorantly affirmed, bore great resemblance to the Saint, but the lovers of the marvellous in the vicinity, rejected the notion with indignation, justly considering such a vulgar death as more appropriate to a puppy dog, than the sanctified St. Ursula.

The odour of her reputation is still so strong, that the hermitage has suffered no decay; and on the anniversary of her supposed translation to a better world, the pious inhabitants walk in mournful procession to her hallowed abode, decorate it with fresh wreaths, and strew flowers on the floor, as offerings of affection, in grateful remembrance of her many virtues and surpassing sanctity.

Matilda related this short history to Sir Ernest, having heard it from her confessor, who was learned in all the true and fabulous traditions of the neighbourhood.

“ This pleasing custom of strewing flowers on the tombs of departed persons is very praiseworthy,” observed Matilda: “ there is a melancholy satisfaction when children plant round the graves of their parents, those flowers which they loved during life: it recalls many fleeting thoughts, and memory delights to trace various instances of love and affection, which would otherwise sink into oblivion.”

“ It is the feeling of an innocent mind,” said Sir Ernest, “ and only exists in those retired spots, where virtue and the kinder affections are still cherished: it is indeed the offspring of peace; but in those places where war with its hateful train of murder, rapine, and all the host of deadly passions has desolated not only the land, but the minds of the inhabitants, few traces of this amiable habit prevail.”

“ There is something particularly soothing and tranquil in the spot we have just passed,” rejoined Matilda, “ and I have generally remarked, that the sites of these

humble cells, and of the more magnificent foundations, have been selected with an uncommon degree of taste and propriety. Could any spot more calculated for retirement, than this individual dwelling of the pious St. Ursula, have been found? and does not the situation of your own Abbey of Hildesheim, situated as it is on that sloping hill, and commanding such a beautiful view of the lake and its scenery, immediately strike the eye as being the best in the vicinity? How do you account for this?"

"Very easily," replied the Knight, "for in the earlier ages, all learning and taste were confined to the inmates of the religious houses, and hence these happy selections for the situation of their abodes."

They now entered a very wild and thick part of the forest, the road leading through a narrow valley, bounded on both sides by rugged rocks, and as they approached a rustic and deserted chapel, which was situated on the right hand, a faint moan

seemed to strike on the ear at intervals. Uncertain whether it was the effect of imagination, or of reality, Emmeline, who had been for some time attentively regarding the chapel, now requested her mother to listen, and all doubt was quickly removed, as a slight breeze springing up at the moment, wafted the sound in a louder note.

The party being instantly halted, Sir Ernest ordered his Squire to dismount, and ascend the hill with some men at arms, to reconnoitre the ground in the immediate vicinity of the building; they had not proceeded far ere they beheld a young female covered with blood, leaning over the lifeless body of a man, and a sudden exclamation of horror, announced to the party below, that some discovery had been made.

Hearing a female voice, the ladies accompanied Sir Ernest to afford their assistance if necessary, for it was the practice of women at that period, to offer their

tender aid in binding up wounds. As they approached the spot, the well-known accents of Matilda's poor foster sister Agnes, struck terror to their hearts, as she wildly cried, "You have cruelly destroyed him, on whom my hopes of happiness were fixed, it will be mercy now to let me share his fate. Strike, strike, you will not find me flinch," and she vehemently pressed the bleeding body to her bosom. It was a sickening sight. The head of the generous Gebhard was nearly separated from the body by a deep gash in the throat, and the blood flowing profusely from several other wounds, had completely saturated the white garments of Agnes, and her long hair having escaped from its fastening, was matted with clotted gore, and ever and anon smeared the face of the distracted girl, whilst the tongue of the unfortunate Gebhard hung from his mouth.

The heart of Matilda died within her, as she clung to Sir Ernest for support, who gently leading her to the chapel, placed

her on the rustic seat, and procured some water from a neighbouring spring. Even the stern men at arms were deeply affected at the sight, for the parties were well known to them, and many had attended their marriage only a few days before.

Lady Ethelinda and Emmeline had now succeeded by their united persuasions, in restoring poor Agnes to some degree of composure, by convincing her that the robbers were no longer in sight, and that the armed men present, were the retainers of Sir Ernest. She at length consented to allow them to bring her some water, to wash the wounds of her husband; but life, had entirely fled. When this decent ceremony was performed, and Agnes had, as far as circumstances permitted, arranged her own dress, she related the story of Gebhard's fate.

“ Having been on a visit to my father-in-law, in consequence of our marriage, we left his house early this morning, hoping to reach Greiffen before the close of the

evening, and had arrived thus far on our return, and were seated on the steps of the chapel, taking some refreshments, when we were suddenly surprised by several men, my dear husband at the same moment receiving a severe blow on his head. Vain were his struggles, and cries for mercy; for after plundering him of all the presents which he had just received from his father, they dragged him behind these thick bushes, and cruelly murdered him. Ah! his cries still ring in my ears. They now seized me, and were on the point of carrying me off, when the trumpets sounding, and some soldiers appearing, the robbers instantly fled. I flew to my poor husband, but my senses failed me, as I fell on his body, and I had only just recovered when your men approaching, awakened me to misery."

The ladies offered every consolation in their power to the afflicted girl, and Sir Ernest humanely ordered some men at arms to accompany her and the body of

her unfortunate husband to the Abbey of Hildesheim. To pursue the murderers was out of the question, as this was the most intricate part of the forest, and nearly impracticable, except to those well acquainted with its mazes; the party therefore, over whom this dreadful event cast a melancholy gloom, proceeded in silence on their route to the castle of Ustar.

CHAPTER XIII.

SIR FREDERICK of Ustar, the head of a noble but decayed house, had passed some years in the warm regions of Italy, when he was introduced to the beautiful Emily Arentschild, whose unaffected modesty and rare mental endowments engaged his esteem, which soon ripened into love. But his passion was not successful, for the fair object of his idolatry, now in her seventeenth year, had already begun to experience the powerful effects of love. She had accompanied her parents on their march through Germany, where they had passed the summer and autumn in viewing the magnificent scenery of the Rhine, and visiting all the celebrated objects in its neighbourhood; and had finally arrived at Naples, with the intention of passing

the winter there; the Count, her father, having been summoned to join the Emperor Frederick with a numerous body of retainers.

Mixing in all the gaieties of that luxurious capital, she was struck with the noble figure and polished manners of Count Herman of Stohlberg, and soon discovered that the attractions of his society awakened an interest in her heart which she had never before experienced. The impression was mutual; for Herman could not long withstand the attractions of such a being as Emily Arentschild. His admiration was excited, and his youthful heart throbbed with delight, at the approach of one so formed to captivate. But when he became acquainted with the sterling beauties of her mind, and the purple light of love had shed its genial influence over their young affections, his open and enthusiastic admiration softened into a more chastened feeling of genuine regard. His attentions, therefore, became cautiously

veiled; for he feared, by attracting the public gaze, to wound the innate modesty of the lovely girl.

It cannot be imagined, that one of nature's fairest creation should fail in exciting a deep interest in the heart of many a noble and gallant youth. A crowd of admirers contended for her smiles; but the Baron of Ustar was distinguished above his competitors for the elegance of his person and the polish of his manners, and contended even with Herman Stohlberg for the first place in her affections: but his noble rival had already made considerable advance in her affections, when he first presented himself to her notice. Both, remarkable for the manly beauty of their persons, possessed equal advantages in the accomplishments of their minds: if Sir Frederick clothed his sentiments in the alluring garb of classic purity of language, Stohlberg enlivened his conversation by those thrilling touches of romantic feeling so congenial to a female breast. Both

urged their suit with impassioned, but chastened energy; and had Sir Frederick appeared sooner on the scene, he perhaps might have obtained the prize: but fate determined it otherwise: and when Herman, with all the tender eloquence of love, pleaded his passion, the downcast eye, the heaving bosom, and the scarcely-breathed sigh—announced his success: and soon after it was observed, that great preparations were making for the approaching nuptials.

About a fortnight previous to the appointed day, as Emily was enjoying the freshness of an April morning, and admiring the opening beauties of the lovely flowers as they gradually unfolded their tender leaves to the genial influence of the vivifying sun, a wandering Bohemian presented herself to her notice, and requested permission to detail all the splendours of her future fortune. Smiling, she extended her hand, but her heart experienced a momentary pain, when the

gipsy, with affected feeling, declared that “her present hopes would be cruelly disappointed; but she would experience true happiness in a union with a noble of a northern country.” The old woman concluded in a solemn tone, whilst the tear half-started from her fiery eye, as if she really believed the truth of her own predictions,—“Trust not earthly hopes, for however pleasing, they are as evanescent as the sunbeam; and forget me not.”

The woman departed, and Emily remained a few moments absorbed in thought, but the gloom quickly vanished, like the passing of a summer cloud; and as nature is again illumined when the sun bursts from its momentary eclipse, in like manner her expressive countenance brightened with returning smiles, as Herman approached and announced that the important day for the imperial fête, which had been some time in preparation, was finally fixed. Emily had prepared a silken embroidered scarf, with her own fair hands, for her be-

loved: and it merely required the motto to complete it, when the concluding words of the gipsy struck her fancy; and whilst she embroidered the words, “forget me not,” in the German character, she related her interview with the old woman.

The Germans are very superstitious, and although Stohlberg joined Emily in ridiculing the folly of the old crone, yet her prediction made a deep and painful impression on his mind; an indefinable sensation of horror thrilled through his veins and filled him with apprehension, and when he received the scarf from Emily with a trembling hand, he pressed it with fervour to his lips, reiterated his touching adieu, yet seemed to linger on the words, and to want the power of tearing himself from her presence, although they were to meet again in a few short hours: at length, with a convulsive effort, he summoned sufficient resolution to bid the final adieu, calling down blessings on her head, yet cast many a long and painful look behind.

Emily had remarked the efforts of her lover to conceal his inward feelings, and naturally attributing the cause to his well-known superstitious feelings, had therefore, although pained at his weakness, exerted herself in the most playful manner, to calm his apprehensions, but without her usual success; she remained absorbed in thought, long after his departure, but the natural firmness of her mind, strengthened by a deep sense of genuine religion, soon enabled her to dispel all the mists and doubts of debasing superstition, yet she felt a more than usual eagerness for their next meeting; but alas! the youthful Herman had indeed pronounced his final adieu.

The hour of dinner arrived, yet no Stohlbergh appeared; Count Arentschild proposed that the repast should be served an hour later than usual, as Herman being attached to the suite of the Emperor, might have been unexpectedly detained. Emily remembered, that her lover had mentioned the intention of Frederick to re-

view the troops lately arrived, and that he had received orders to accompany His Majesty: this calmed their apprehensions for some time, but when hour after hour elapsed, and the messenger, who had been despatched to ascertain the cause of his absence, announced with a mournful countenance, "that the Count had not yet returned to his hotel, although the review had terminated at an early hour," the scene of the morning instantly flashed across her mind, and created dreadful apprehensions: tears of bitter sorrow rolled down her pallid cheek, the brightness of her smile had fled, whilst the vacant eye and troubled brow, declared, that lingering hope had almost abandoned her: the dark and dismal boding of the crone, alone occupied her thoughts, and reigned triumphant; but when night advanced, and the fatal tidings reached her ear, that Count Stohlberg had been thrown from his horse and killed on the spot, she stood the fixed and wretched statue of despair.

Emily had just been removed in a sense-

less state to her apartments, when Sir Frederick, with deep emotion depicted on his countenance, was announced, and confirming the report, related the following particulars of this melancholy event.

“The Count Stohlberg had accompanied the Emperor to the review, mounted on a noble and spirited charger; but as yet unaccustomed to the various penons of the Knights, on the advance of the front of the whole division, the Count’s horse became exceedingly restive, and, as the cavalcade approached at full speed to within a few paces of the Emperor, entirely unmanageable; and rearing up, although its rider shewed great temper and skill, lost its balance and fell back with the unfortunate Count, who could not disengage his foot from the stirrup under him.”

Sir Frederick was too delicate to state the generous part he had acted in this unfortunate affair, but the remaining particulars were imparted to Count Arentschild by the brother of Herman.

The Baron of Ustar, forgetting his feel-

ings of rivalry, instantly leaped from his horse, and assisting in extricating the already dying Count, had him immediately conveyed to his own quarters, which happened to be situated very near the spot. The best medical aid was obtained, but all efforts proved fruitless. The unhappy Herman was sensible to the last, and deeply lamented the sorrow and anguish which his melancholy fate would occasion his innocent and tenderly-beloved bride. He thanked Sir Frederick for his generous assistance; and hoped that, when time should soothe the unhappy Emily's grief, and her parents should urge her to wed, that he would be her choice, as he considered him most calculated to promote her happiness, knowing how highly she esteemed him: earnestly requesting his rival to break the melancholy tidings, he in a few moments after expired in the greatest torture.

The spring had passed, and summer had rapidly advanced, when Count Arentschild

resolved to try what effect change of scene might produce on the mind of his afflicted daughter: too generous and affectionate in disposition to grieve her excellent parents, by the outward signs of violent sorrow, (but indeed her mind was formed in too gentle a mould ever to exhibit the traces of highly-excited feelings), she brooded in silent melancholy over the fatal termination of her dreams of future happiness: yet, though in the presence of others, and particularly of her parents, she bore her sorrows so meekly; an attentive observer could easily discover the workings of deep and touching grief, through the thin veil of cheerful resignation.

Did the Baron of Ustar surrender himself to sincere regret for the death of his noble rival? Generous in disposition, and of refined principles of mind, he deeply felt the miserable termination of Herman's earthly joys,—did ample justice to his splendid merits, and particularly

to the grateful wishes he had expressed for his own future prospects. But hope sometimes told a flattering tale, and visions of bliss flashed over his heated imagination. Yet, determined to avoid any display of these reviving feelings, he exerted all his energies to controul for the present, the favourite passion of his soul, till time should soften the sorrows of his adored Emily into composure.

He had accepted frequent invitations from the Count, but on these occasions his daughter had not appeared. A few days, however, previous to their departure on their projected tour, the Baron was again prevailed on to pass the day with them; and he experienced indescribable pleasure in tracing the well-known characters of the invitation, for Emily herself had written it. It has been already stated that the brother of Herman, and successor of his titles and estates, had at his dying request related the active exertions and unremitting attentions of Sir Frederick; and this

generous conduct towards his rival, had sunk deep in Emily's heart, and she wished to thank him in person for his noble behaviour to one so tenderly beloved.

The Baron ascended the stairs with a palpitating heart: months had elapsed since he had last seen her; she was then the affianced bride of another, but now, yet the thought almost died in the conception, she might at some future period be wooed and won for his own happiness. His confusion was rather encreased on finding Emily alone. She rose to receive him with grace and dignity, whilst the silver tear glistened in her eye, and her eloquent blood crimsoned her pale cheeks, as she feelingly thanked him in a few short but expressive words, for his noble behaviour to the departed —; but the name died on her tongue. She felt a tremulous motion, as he gently raised her hand to his lips, which plainly told the state of his inward feelings, and they were both relieved by the entrance of her parents.

Emily was evidently much agitated, the meeting with Sir Frederick recalled the dying scene to her imagination; but her attentive mother observing the state of the poor sufferer's thoughts, gently drew her arm within her own, and led the trembling girl from the room.

With flushed brow, and deeply excited, the Baron strained his eyes to catch the last view of his retiring mistress: one only object occupied his thoughts; to him the world appeared a blank without that fascinating being. The sound, however of the Count's voice, recalled his scattered senses, and he entered with tolerable composure into the interesting topics of the day. The Countess soon reappearing, apologised for the absence of Emily, but said she would join them in the evening. The dinner passed off well, the Arentschilds possessing great powers of conversation; and as the subject naturally led to their projected tour, Sir Frederick eagerly contributed his share. It was at length

decided that they should visit Rome, the antiquities of which city would afford them ample amusement: and they fondly hoped that the interesting study would engage their daughter's attention.

Taking advantage of the beauty of the evening, they retired to the fine gardens attached to the hotel, and enjoyed the shade of the noble plane trees, to the protection and management of which, the Italians, in imitation of the ancient Romans, attached so much importance. No garden is perfect without this grove of planes and sycamores; and indeed it is not surprising, considering how much of their time they pass in the open air, that they should entertain such a partiality for these noble trees, at once so ornamental and useful, and affording such a cool retreat during the intensity of the summer heats.

The gentle Emily soon joined their party, and although that brilliant smile which formerly lighted her expressive features, no longer displayed its animating playfulness.

ness; and the lustre of her speaking eye, which almost seemed to hold sweet converse with the soul, was obscured: yet the captivating and touching softness of her manners was equally engaging. The conversation on the subject of the route was renewed; and Emily learnt with evident pleasure their new destination, for she was a great admirer of antiquities, and her portfolio contained various views sketched with a vigorous pencil.

Count Arentschild, who had always entertained the warmest sentiments of regard for the Baron, asked him if his official duties would permit him to accompany them? A slight blush suffused the countenance of Emily, as she was fully aware of the feelings of regard which both her parents experienced for her admirer. Ustar himself was instantly struck at this unexpected chance of renewing his former attentions, thus favorably presented to his acceptance, and assented to the tempting proposal with an eagerness which clearly indicated that

his former affection had only slumbered in the inmost recesses of his heart, and was now ready to blaze forth in all its intensity.

The delight of the Count and his Lady was extreme, but of a more sober character; even the lovely and interesting Emily experienced some slight touches of pleasure; for independent of her real admiration of the Baron's character and accomplishments, she knew that he had frequently visited Rome, and had delineated the various magnificent views there with a master's hand; she had then the prospect of having these scenes presented to her notice, by one so competent to improve her taste, and add to the beauty of her collection, and who would also be an agreeable addition to the society of her parents. The day of their departure was fixed in the following week, Sir Frederick undertaking to make all the necessary arrangements.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE important morning arrived, and though the melancholy event which had so suddenly terminated her early love, again presented itself in vivid colours, as the party rode past the fatal spot, where the Count Stohlberg had met his fate, yet the habitual command of her feelings soon enabled Emily to resume her outward composure. Sir Frederick was too good a judge of the female heart, for he had studied it accurately, and too delicate in his ideas, to notice the inward struggle in her mind; and although his bosom beat with the warmest attachment, yet he obtruded not his open admiration of her perfections, but daily endeavoured to gain additional interest in her esteem, by those

silent and nameless attentions, which are alone understood by a pure and refined mind.

This delicate conduct made more impression on Emily than he had expected, and tended greatly to his advantage: secure from open declarations of love, she could with more propriety and safety enjoy his agreeable society, and demand information on all the interesting remains of Roman antiquities, which were on all sides presented to their notice, in the various towns through which they passed. It was a subject on which he delighted to dwell, and constantly enriched his observations by many curious and interesting anecdotes of the olden time. By degrees she accompanied him to many picturesque scenes, which she sketched with unusual facility, as he imparted to her several useful and simple hints, in this elegant and delightful art: at length he became so necessary to her happiness, that she felt, although unconscious of the real cause, a void in their

society, when he was engaged on visits of ceremony to the various functionaries of the Papal Court.

They had now resided some time at the splendid capital of the ancient world, which afforded pleasing employment for their leisure hours, and were in the habit of making frequent excursions in the neighbourhood of Rome, and Emily was engaged in giving the last touches to the celebrated fall of Tivoli, when the Baron presented her with a volume of sketches, finished in the most admirable style, of all those interesting remains, (which crowd so rapidly to the view in this region, celebrated by so many recollections,) with a short but comprehensive historical notice attached to each.

Emily had long expressed her wish for such a work, and no offering could have been more acceptable. Whether the mind is more deeply affected, and the heart more easily touched in these wild scenes, where nature displays her beauty and

grandeur, Emily was entirely thrown off her guard, and received it with evident delight, and a silent but speaking glance, which pierced to the very soul of the Baron; then immediately considering the motive which probably dictated the gift, she became confused, and blushed rosy red whilst he addressed her:

“ I have only this morning completed this trifling work, and the exquisite delight it has afforded me, in the hope of contributing, even in the slightest degree, to your instruction and amusement, has been a source of happiness, which perhaps will never be my lot to feel again; but it may sometimes recall to your memory, the recollection of one who would willingly shed the last drop of his blood for your welfare and protection, for whilst there is pulsation in this heart, it shall beat for you alone. I see that this distresses you, but it is the last day of our meeting, for duty compels me to return to Naples to-morrow; may I not —” At this critical moment

some persons advancing towards them, interrupted the remainder of the Baron's passionate address. The frame of Emily was visibly agitated, and the frequent tear coursed down her crimsoned cheek, as she falteringly avowed, "That she highly prized the gift, and that the donor should always live in her remembrance."

Both deeply affected, retraced their silent steps, and immediately joined the Arentschild's. Emily quickly recovered her serenity, yet there was a restlessness in her manner at times, which indicated that all was not quite tranquil within, and her eye sank under the glance of Sir Frederick: there was a forced gaiety, yet the day passed heavily. The Count mentioned that it was their intention to winter in Rome, and earnestly pressed the Baron to rejoin their party, should the Emperor be prevailed on to dispense with his valuable services. Even the gentle Emily joined her mother in urging this request; and when the Knight rose to bid adieu, there

was a touching softness in her manner, when she presented her hand, which he pressed tenderly to his lips, that spoke comfort to his heart.

Time rolled on, and winter passed away, still Sir Frederick came not, and various were the conjectures regarding the motives of his long continued absence, which created considerable uneasiness in the breast of her parents, (for he had previous to his departure, acquainted the Count with the state of his passion). There was evidently an encreasing feeling of regard in Emily's mind; she delighted to converse with her mother, on his various merits and accomplishments;—spoke with feeling of his delicate reserve during their summer excursion, and as day succeeded day, without producing any information regarding him, she expressed great impatience at the obstacles which prevented their meeting; yet the innocent girl was probably unconscious that love was the cause of her uneasiness. Her parents, however, viewed

these decided symptoms of partiality with evident delight, as her union with the noble and generous Baron of Ustar, was the object nearest their heart.

Sir Frederick was himself almost distracted, fearing that her thoughts might again assume their gloomy cast, and revert to the fatal death of the unfortunate Herman, unless by renewing his daily intercourse with her, he could succeed in improving the advantages he had already gained. He had almost begun to abandon hope, when political events produced the object for which he sighed.

New disputes having arisen between the Emperor and the Pope, on the ever fruitful subject of the troubles in Italy, which were constantly fomented by both parties for their own ambitious purposes, Sir Frederick was commissioned by his master to proceed immediately to Rome, to endeavour to soften the resentment, and lessen the outrageous demands of the haughty Pontiff. And no individual could

have been selected for this delicate mission with more judgment, since from his noble principles, and perfect acquaintance with the Italian interests, and his strict impartiality, he had justly acquired the esteem of all parties. Hastening his preparations, he quitted Naples with every hope and prospect of realizing his fond dreams.

Emily had just returned from an agreeable excursion of some days, highly enchanted with the beautiful scenery she had witnessed, and was lamenting her want of skill in giving effect to an ancient castle, situated on a bold projecting rock, crowned with gloomy firs, and huge oaks, coeval with itself. "I wish Sir Frederick were here; his pencil alone can pourtray such sublime views; yet I wish success would reward my efforts, as it would afford me great satisfaction to present it to him, to shew that however he may have forgotten us, we still hold him in remembrance."

Count Arentschild smiled at her remarks,

for at the moment the Baron of Ustar advanced unperceived with rapid step, and hearing, with heightened complexion, the flattering observation, declared to his mistress's unaffected surprise, "That the Lady Emily's image had never been absent from his view." His reception was indeed beyond his utmost expectations, for that enchanting and playful smile which had formerly enlivened her features, again passed over her lovely countenance, and her eloquent eyes spoke grateful intelligence to his heart. He briefly related the causes of his long and painful absence, and the object of his present mission. His pardon was easily obtained, as his society was such a valuable addition, and his gaiety electrified the now happy party.

As more than fifteen months had elapsed since the death of the Count Stohlberg, he ventured to address Emily with increasing tenderness, and his undisguised attentions were evidently well received. She described her excursions, and as her

sketch book was on the table, Sir Frederick requesting permission to see it, was lavish yet judicious in his commendations; and taking her pencil, with a few skilful touches, gave a more imposing effect to the old castle, on which she had been engaged on his late arrival. She was quite enchanted with the bold relief produced, and in the enthusiasm of the moment, arising from her love of the arts, declared, "That she wished him always to be present to correct her taste." She was instantly conscious of the meaning he attached to her innocent expression, for his dark expressive eye seemed to read the inmost secret of her heart.

From his daily intercourse with her, his society hourly wore new attractions, and his attentions became more decided, when a trifling incident confirmed him in his hopes.

Relating some anecdotes of the ancient temples in Rome, he requested Emily to produce the views to illustrate his remarks;

the book was enveloped in a case of silk, and placed with her most valuable trinkets. He warmly thanked her for the importance she attached to his only gift : they were now alone : the bashful sinking of the eye under his impassioned glance, the plaintive tones of her voice, her scarcely audible sigh, betrayed the state of her heart, when Sir Frederick embraced the happy opportunity of pleading his passion—detailing in glowing language the progress of his attachment, which had never slumbered, except when the expression of it would have pained her delicate feelings, and earnestly entreated her to yield a willing consent. Emily, with timid embarrassment, candidly acknowledged the warm regard she had entertained for him from the first commencement of their acquaintance ; then explained, in artless language, the impression Herman had made on her youthful heart, the sincere affection with which she had wept over his untimely

fate, and the fond regard with which she still cherished his memory ; and tenderly confessed that Ustar was worthy of a heart which had never owned a preference for another.

Her noble lover declared, with great warmth, that all his hopes depended upon her consent. She gently added, “ That if he could accept her hand after the explicit declaration she had made, her whole life should be devoted to his happiness.” The beautiful and accomplished Emily Arents-child became Baroness of Ustar, and truly did she fulfil her promise, for her nuptial day was the commencement of an age of bliss.

Sir Frederick had scarcely succeeded in the object of his mission, when the death of the Emperor released him from the necessity of revisiting Naples, and the happy pair, accompanied by their parents, returned to their native country, and repaired to Ustar Castle, an ancient but dilapidated pile ; which, however, was soon

placed in a complete state of repair, through the unbounded generosity of the Count Arentschild, who settled the whole of his extensive domains on his daughter, to devolve to her on the death of himself and his Countess.

In this mansion, which had been the principal residence of his ancestors during six hundred years, he lived in retirement with his lovely wife, (whose accomplishments would have rendered any home agreeable,) not merely from choice, but from motives of economy ; for time, in his fatal course, had laid his destroying hand on the vast possessions of this once powerful family, and the domains immediately surrounding the Castle were barely sufficient to support a moderate establishment : but on his accession to the estates of the house of Arentschild, the splendour of Ustar was restored, and generous hospitality once more resided under its roof.

Their mutual affection was crowned some time after their arrival with a fine

boy ; but blighting disease soon withered the opening graces of the blooming child, who, like many a delicate and beautiful flower, just blossomed into life, then drooped, faded away, and died. Their whole affection afterwards centered on the lovely Blanch, the exact image of her mother.

CHAPTER XV.

THE morning dawned, the young day rose with renewed splendour, and the light laugh of hilarity announced the commencement of the preparations for the sports of the field ; but sleep still retained Matilda and her sister in its death-like embrace, until the increasing hum of voices in the courts below, and the passing and repassing of the knightly trains in all the pomp of military parade, and the rays of a brilliant sun, as it glanced into their apartment, aroused and reminded them of the necessity of preparing for the early arrangements of the day.

The affectionate Emmeline, throwing her arms tenderly round her sister's neck, and kissing her polished forehead, said,

“ I sincerely rejoice to see you rise apparently so refreshed, for uneasy dreams appeared to disturb your first slumbers.”

“ Your conjectures, my sweet Emmeline, are correct, for that appalling scene which we witnessed at the rustic chapel, filled my brain with visions of distractful sight. The whole story floated before me like the rapid changes of an April day—first, all was light and brilliancy, and sweet as the promise of the maiden spring, as the tender buds just burst into blossom under the kindly influence of the sun; but suddenly the envious storm obscuring its rays, the expanding flowers droop their bending heads in sadness, cloud rolls after cloud, heavy drops begin to fall, anon the rain pours its fatness on the saturated earth, and light is changed into darkness. So the events of my wretched foster sister’s story passed in review.—First the bride appeared decked in all her native loveliness, in a snow white garment, the emblem of her own purity;

then came the delighted mother, proud of her daughter's beauty, as it recalled the remembrance of days long past ; next the half bashful bridegroom, stealing a glance at his beloved, as the procession moved to the church ; then the broad laugh on many a smiling countenance, occasioned by some happy effort of rustic wit. But soon the scene was changed, and the second act of the drama disclosed its accumulation of horrors. The countenance of my poor Agnes at first wore the same heavenly expression as on the morning when we presented those gifts which enabled her to solemnize the marriage which has proved so fatal to her peace ; but suddenly she was transported to that gloomy wood, where, methought, I saw the iron visages of the cruel murderers, as with savage eagerness they drew the cold steel along poor Guebhardt's throat, when some invisible power held me chained to the spot, whilst the hot blood spirted from his

full charged veins over my garments. But why should I repeat the rest? I am not naturally superstitious, but a heavy weight oppresses my mind, and makes me dread the approach of some severe misfortune.”

“My dear Matilda,” replied Emmeline, “it is very natural, considering the affection we both entertain for Agnes, that we should feel deeply distressed at her wretched fate; but how can you, with your vigorous and enlightened mind, permit such an event to have this superstitious effect on you? It might be allowable for such a giddy and light hearted girl as I am to start such ideas; but you will soon recover your spirits, and your countenance will lighten into smiles at the first view of Sir Ernest. Heigho! when shall I have a handsome young Knight to twist the reins so sweetly through my fingers! Are brothers generally so attentive to their sisters, Matilda,” looking archly at the same time in her face.

Matilda, blushing deeply, replied, "You too have been dreaming child—you are so fanciful this morning."

"Ah," replied Emmeline, "my fancy is no dream, but the delightful reality. You are intimately acquainted with the character and excellent disposition of dear Ernest—he is worthy of your regard, and in every respect calculated to ensure your future happiness. Prepare yourself for an immediate declaration—for although, being no astrologer, I cannot read the stars, yet I can the eyes. Poor Sir Lutold! with all his grandeur, I pity the unhappy man."

Matilda threw herself into her sister's arms, and hiding her face in her bosom, in a soft whisper said—"But he has never told that he loved me."

"But your own heart and your eyes," replied Emmeline, "have given you the certain information." At this moment a gentle tap at the door announced the approach of some person, and, raising the

latch, Blanch entered, and offered the salutations of the morning. She had scarcely fulfilled the early promise of her infant years, and was not a regular beauty, but possessed that animated expression of countenance which frequently is more pleasing than mere regularity of features. In height she was rather above the common standard, and her complexion, which was beautifully clear, rivalled the lily in colour; but the most captivating feature was her mouth, and her teeth were perfect. But who can describe her eyes—their sweet expression was so modest—her self possession and carriage were in unison—she had only to appear to please.

The sprightly conversation of Blanch soon chased grief from the light hearts of the sisters, for the sorrows of the young are not lasting—new objects soon engage their elastic affections, and, as a lovely flower that droops at the first shock of the chilling breeze, soon raises its opening beauties to the reviving rays of the genial

sun—so they soon recovered the animated expression of their countenances.

The various preparations and arrangements for the hunt were now discussed; the different Knights were passed in review, and each received his due share of praise or blame, according to his desert. “But who,” asked Blanch, “is that uncommonly handsome and dignified squire in attendance on Sir Herman? His face is new to me: my father, however, remembers having seen him in the suite of the late Count Montfort, and was particularly struck with his appearance; and now that he has advanced to manhood, he says that he bears the most striking resemblance to an old companion in arms, long since deceased. I think the name is Sir William of Altenburg; the mention of it, however, had such a sudden effect on the gallant Sir Lutold, that a deadly paleness overspread his countenance, and this was instantly succeeded by such a terrific expression of hatred and fear, that almost made me

spring from my chair. I cannot decipher that man: he is certainly handsome, his figure is very commanding, his manners polished, his conversation light, and excessively agreeable, and, what generally engages woman's attention, he is renowned for his valour and skill in all military exercises; yet he rather inspires me with fear than confidence. But possibly I do him great injustice, and that it is only his superior merit which fills me with awe, and makes me tremble to approach him."

"The name of the Squire," replied Matilda, "is Hugo: he has only lately entered the castle of Greiffen, and my father is much attached to him; but he has, indeed, interested all hearts in his favour, by his many engaging qualities and amiable disposition. There evidently, however, appears to be some mystery attached to his birth, as he is very reserved on the subject, except to my father, who treats him with great confidence and distinction."

"Since your toilet is now completed,"

remarked Blanch, “we may descend to the hall, where breakfast is prepared, and the Knights all assembled. You are already acquainted with them, with the exception of the high and mighty Count of Friburgh, who greatly resembles your late favourite, the Count Moritz, in character. This stately gentleman has certainly forgotten one of the leading duties of chivalry—a high respect and courtesy towards the fairer part of creation : he seems to consider us as slaves born for man’s pleasure, and unworthy of the slightest notice in the daily intercourse of society. Love he treats as the phantom of a poet’s imagination : and when it shall please his highness to marry, (which he considers a necessary evil), he declares his high birth is a sufficient passport to any woman’s favor. So, my dear Emmeline, if he should deign to select you as his bride, you will not experience all the pains and pleasures of a long courtship. But, hark !

the trumpet summons us to the grand hall."

"Stop, my dearest Blanch, you have not drawn the character of Sir Arnould of Tockenbergh," said Emmeline, laughing. It was a tender subject, and the allusion improved the maiden's complexion.

The entrance of the lovely trio naturally attracted the immediate attention of the whole party; and the touching simplicity of Matilda's countenance, and that alluring charm which grief for the fate of the wretched Agnes still shed over it, made a deep impression on the heart of many a gallant youth: but the passion of the moment, and the fond and rising hope, was nipped in its early bud, by that crimson blush, and downcast timid look, with which she received the attentions of Sir Ernest and Sir Lutold, who both presented themselves to her notice at the same moment. It was evident to the in-

terested observers, that one of the Knights had obtained the preference in her regard, by that air of bashful restraint with which she now conversed, so different from her usual graceful and unembarrassed manner ; but it was difficult to distinguish the favourite. The air and conversation of Sir Lutold was impassioned, as if he had already secured an interest in her innocent heart, and therefore felt authorized to express his attachment without any attempt at disguise : whilst the conduct of the more youthful Sir Ernest was tender and respectful, and although his every look and word spoke of love, still the exhibition of his sentiments was restrained within the bounds of delicacy ; for he was too intimately acquainted with the feelings of her pure and sensitive mind, to alarm her by too impetuous a display of his wishes and hopes. But these observations were interrupted by the entrance of the noble host, accompanied by a Knight of haughty mien and

athletic frame, who appeared to consider himself superior to the assembled guests, scarcely deigning to acknowledge the compliments of the other Knights as equals : but if they did not receive many marks of his condescension, the fairer sex obtained fewer proofs of his regard—with the exception, indeed, of Emmeline, as the illustrious Count did, for a few minutes, relax the iron muscles of his stern countenance, when, being presented to her by Sir Frederick, he complimented her on gracing the hall with her beautiful presence, and declared she was formed to make any spot a Paradise. At this instant she raised her eye, and caught the speaking smile of Blanch's countenance ; when the remarks she had made on the subject, immediately previous to their entrance, suggested the painful idea to her mind, that more was meant than caught the ear.

They were now preparing to take their allotted seats, when the loud blasts of the trumpets, and the clatter of horses'

hoofs in the court yard, announced the arrival of another guest ; and in a few moments the stranger, accompanied by his wife and daughters, were received by the Baron with the greatest marks of respect. The Knight was near seven feet in height, but slender in person, with his head small and bald, and complexion pale. At first there was an air of gravity and composure in his countenance ; but when addressing his old friends, particularly Sir Herman, his features became animated ; and on being presented by him to his daughters, they soon discovered that his manners were fascinating, and his conversation persuasive : his eyes beamed with delight as he recalled to their recollection many little anecdotes of their earlier years, and the tricks they had, in the exuberance of their girlish spirits, played him ; and they then remembered their gigantic playmate the Count of Hapsburg. Their intimacy was at once renewed with the amiable Countess and her daughters.

How different was the reception of Rodolph to that of the Count of Friburgh: the first, dignified, yet easy and condescending in his manners, created joy in the hearts of the assembled group on his arrival—the latter, all pride and hauteur, experienced only cold civility, and threw a gloom over the party. The contrast was indeed striking.

The ceremonies of the table were at length finally arranged, the Count of Hapsburg occupying the seat of honour, whilst to her evident satisfaction Sir Ernest conducted Matilda to her place, and it poured balm into her innocent heart, that she was not exposed to the bold gaze, and light unmeaning conversation of a stranger. What Sir Ernest's real sentiments were in regard to this lovely girl, could not be ascertained from his behaviour on this occasion, for his attentions though polite, were regulated by the fear of wounding the feelings of the innocent object of his warm affection, still suffering

under the pain and horror occasioned by the dreadful scene which she had witnessed in the forest: but though he conversed not in the warm language of admiration, yet the charm of his considerate conduct stole insensibly to her heart, and encreased the pure flame that grateful love had lighted there, and she soon became sensible, that all her thoughts were absorbed by this growing passion.

The trumpets sounded, as the ladies retired to prepare for the forest excursion, but much time elapsed before the fairy vision disappeared from the enraptured imagination of Sir Ernest. The soft and eloquent tones of her voice still charmed his ear with their music, and many an airy castle of future happiness, with the cherished object of his affections, floated in varied succession before his eyes;—Hope touched all his prospects with her magic wand; no envious cloud obscured the bright horizon; all was love and harmony. It

is impossible to say how long he would have indulged in this pleasing dream of fancy, had not Sir Frederick dissolved the spell by summoning the company to the forest.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE offer of hunting the wild boar was joyfully accepted, particularly as this animal abounded in that wild region of the forest which surrounded Ustar. For a love of military exercises, and the invigorating amusements of the chase, characterised the nobility and knights of those days, whilst effeminacy, and love of slothful ease, were held in universal contempt: and no knight could hope to obtain a lady's love, were he not at all times ready to expose himself to danger. The fondness for these healthy sports, and the habit of passing so much of their time in the open air, which obtained particularly amongst the Germans, (and even prevails at the present day, with females as well as men,) produced a dis-

tinguished manliness, both of mind and person.

The preparations being complete, the gay cavalcade, consisting of fair ladies with their attendant and favored Knights, Squires, and men at arms, (for the forest was infested with formidable bands of robbers), huntsmen, and hounds, proceeded in all the pomp of military array, to enjoy the exhilarating labours of the field. The feudal serfs had been summoned to afford their assistance in driving the game, and had been dispatched early in the morning with several ferocious wolf dogs to the chosen ground. As the sportsmen penetrated into the wild woodlands, the merry sounds of their shrill horns echoed through the aged oaks, and disturbed the profound stillness of the deep solitudes, and their loud challenge was soon answered from the heart of the forest.

Sir Frederick stationed the party in a long line, a gallant Knight with several men at arms, being appointed to guard

each lovely dame, for the sport was attended with considerable danger ; yet it did not partake of that active and exhilarating character, which is the distinguishing feature of the British mode of hunting and shooting, and which adds such peculiar interest to the pursuit. For instead of beating the thickets, and rousing and pursuing the game, by following the scent with the dogs, the party remained stationary for hours, whilst the peasantry forming a grand semi-circle, and embracing an extent of country equal in breadth to the line of sportsmen, and flanked by several mounted forresters with their dogs, drove the game in mass before them, until they came within reach of the assailing party.

Although the scene had hitherto been tame, the present moment was certainly not devoid of great excitement:—the cries of the peasants, the howling of the animals, the hoarse braying of the hounds, with the triumphant shouts of the Knights, as some lucky bolt or arrow reached its destined

aim, made the mountains resound with the noise, and caused the languid blood to flow in more rapid currents. Baffled in their first attempt to break the formidable line, the wounded and terrified beasts turned on their pursuers, but found the torches which they carried, still more terrific than the bolts and arrows of the mounted line. Wheeling back again, the more timid flew distracted in every direction, whilst the fierce and powerful, sullenly advancing, seemed to be collecting their most determined efforts for a general charge. Their tormentors now rapidly approaching, they encreased their pace, until finding no cessation of the pursuit, and summoning all their resolution, they made one desperate rush, as if determined to bear down all opposition, or perish in the effort.

Many paid the forfeit of their temerity, but the greater number escaped, for as the stags congregated in herds, and made a simultaneous attack, their charge was too formidable for the men at arms to resist,

and having dismounted, they were obliged, after discharging their bolts and arrows, to throw themselves on their faces, whilst the enraged animals rushed over them; but fatal was it for poor Schneider, the page of the Count of Hapsburg, who either through ignorance or tardiness, was trampled and gored to death. Two also of Sir Lutold's retainers had shared the same fate, in a vain attempt to shoot the stags, before they reached their position.

But the wild hogs making unconnected efforts, suffered more severely, and many a prostrate carcase announced the termination of their career. Yet the conquerors did not purchase a bloodless victory, as some of the sportsmen had received desperate wounds and contusions.

The beautiful Matilda and her sister Emmeline had also a narrow escape, for an enormous hog had rushed towards the spot where they were stationed, but fortunately Sir Lutold, who had panted for an opportunity of engaging the favour of

his admired fair one, saw the imminent danger in which she was placed, should the spear of Sir Ernest, who had been specially charged to protect the sisters, fail in arresting the formidable monster; judging his distance, he charged the enraged beast in flank, as he approached within a few yards, but only partially wounding him, the hog tore the leg of his noble charger with his tremendous tusk:—the moment was precious, and the delay enabled Sir Ernest and his Squire to drive their spears into his shoulder, and dispatch him.

Sir Lutold's horse had fallen in consequence of the violent shock, and the Knight himself was thrown with considerable force to the ground. Generous and grateful in her disposition, and uncertain what injuries he might have received, (for it was the work of an instant), Matilda instantly dismounted, and inquiring tenderly if his wounds were severe, expressed her sincere thanks for his noble effort, and lamented that in

attempting her preservation, he should have experienced this untoward accident.

Sir Lutold declared in the most impassioned language, "The idea of having in any manner contributed to your safety, is more than sufficient to console me for the trifling pain I at present endure; and even were my bruises of more serious consequence, your gentle compassion would be as balm to my wounds."

Matilda, distressed at the warmth of his language, hastened to conclude a conversation which could only lead to very unpleasant results; and returning acknowledgments in her own and her sister's name, for the interest he expressed for their welfare, said she would gallop to the castle and dispatch her father's cunning leech to his assistance; and, turning to Sir Ernest and Hugo, "I must not prove ungrateful to the deliverers of my sister and myself from our danger; but the wounded naturally demanded our first attention." Mounting her favourite horse,

with Sir Ernest's aid, they advanced with rapidity on their return to Ustar, the sports of the morning having terminated with great success. Sir Lutold having been placed on a bier made of the branches of trees, was carried at a slow pace by some of his retainers, and did not reach the castle until late in the evening; but on examination his hurts did not prove of serious consequence. .

CHAPTER XVII.

SIR HERMAN having, in his late visit to Ustar, received some hints that the Count of Regensberg was certainly connected with the marauders who had lately committed such cruel atrocities, determined, if possible, to obtain some accurate information on the subject; as the enterprising character of this powerful chieftain rendered all his movements an object of extreme interest to the neighbouring nobility. Under the pretence of inquiring after his health, in consequence of the injuries he had received at the grand boar hunt, he dispatched Hugo, with three or four men at arms, on this delicate mission; with the secret injunction, to make such accurate observations, as a due regard

to his own personal safety, and that of his companions, would permit ; and particularly to ascertain whether Sir Lutold had actually received considerable reinforcement of the free bands.

“ Well, Charles,” said Hugo, “ do you remember the night we were in such hazard of sleeping in this gloomy forest, under the cool shelter of a wide spreading oak ? What unearthly sounds alarmed you ? How can you venture to expose yourself again to such danger ? ”

“ You may laugh, Sir Squire,” replied Charles, “ but the time may one day arrive, when you will be compelled to own the sad reality of these mysterious beings. Have you not heard of the Lady Abbess of Hildesheim ?—she has been dead full one hundred years.”

“ And have you not learnt,” answered Hugo, “ the sequel of that tale : how Fielchen, having first circulated a report that the Abbess had resumed the usual seat, which she had constantly occupied

during her life time, threw a sheet over her person, put on a mask, and then personated the good mother, in order to meet her lover without fear of the prying eyes of curiosity. Why, varlet, thou art incredulous; but demand the particulars of father Clement himself on your return, as he discovered the cheat, and you will hardly doubt his veracity. You may also remember the ghost at Steinberg—how well authenticated that story was. Recollect how often we ourselves observed the phantom actually walking on the wall of the castle; and did we not at length clear this surprising mystery, when retiring late one night to bed, as we passed along the eastern corridor, we discovered the young and gallant Kniphausen entering the window at the extreme end of the passage, and afterwards proceed to the door of the Lady Louisa's chamber; but on perceiving that he was discovered, did he not enjoin us to secrecy, and point out that the ledge of stone which ran under

the windows was sufficiently broad to admit of a bold lover walking along with tolerable security, although, from its height, it did not appear to project when seen from below: and is not this simple fact the foundation of one of those veritable legends in that neighbourhood?"

"This is all true," said Charles, "but still I am bound to believe what the priest tells me."

"But will you not rather trust to your own senses? My sight may deceive me, Sir Squire. It is wonderful what a number of visions nurse Dorothy has seen—and every person at Greiffen believes what she tells them. It is enough to make one's hair stand an end, she so frightens a body. Then she is always so ghost-like the next morning, and her eyes look so red: something extraordinary must cause this."

"Beyond a doubt," replied Hugo, laughing; "but she is always troubled with these dreams after a visit to the castle, and the

good cheer she enjoys there is quite sufficient to account for the red eyes and pale face; and when the devil tripped up her heels at the bridge, and left her for dead, he was most unjustly accused, for one of his imps, in the shape of a flask of wine, had done the business; for she was found early the next morning gloriously drunk, and the wine quite exhausted."

"Mayhap this really was the truth," replied Charles; "but it is very difficult to refuse credit to that, which from our early infancy, we are taught implicitly to believe."

The party had now advanced into the deepest part of the forest, without any interruption, the two men at arms walking their horses at some distance, when a bolt from a cross bow whizzed by their heads, and their ears were assailed by the clashing of arms; not waiting for a second shot, they spurred on their horses, and were instantly followed by their attendants, who closed up with them: on arriving at

the bottom of the steep descent, where the rapid and roaring stream of Greinsfeld crossed the road, they found the wet ground ploughed up with the trampling of horses, and the grass stained with marks of blood, and soon discovered the bodies of six men lying amongst the underwood, and weltering in their gore. Five were quite dead, although still warm, the sixth desperately wounded, yet alive, but faint from the great loss of blood. Quickly binding up his wounds, and pouring some wine down his parched throat, by degrees they obtained the following relation:

“ I belonged to a party of sixteen, who were escorting some treasure to Zurich, when we were attacked by a numerous gang of freebooters; finding, after a severe contest, that opposition against such a vast superiority was useless, the remaining ten of our party, being well mounted, pushed through their assailants and fled, but were immediately pursued, a few only of the gang remaining behind, who after

rifling our pockets, and dragging the bodies of my companions and of myself amongst the bushes, on hearing your approach, also rode off with such of our horses as they could catch."

"Have you any idea," enquired Hugo, "whether the gang consists of those who usually infest the forest, or belong to any of the neighbouring garrisons?"

"It is certainly composed, Sir Squire, of part of the condottieri, under their monkish leader Bertoldo, for cunning as he is, and anxious to conceal his connexion with these savage marauders, whose rapacities have raised the indignation of our own good city of Zurich, and the other rising republics, he has still been recognized by one, who has long known him."

"What object can he have," demanded Hugo, "in these parts with such a numerous body of mercenaries?"

"Thousand devils, Sir Squire, his own wickedness has led him here, to plunder

the peaceful merchants, and amass sufficient money to obtain restitution of his abbey, or some other preferment equally good. He neglected, after the infamous plunder of Altenburg, to forward his share to Rome, and he must now repay this omission with interest, before he obtains pardon for his numerous sins; but I yet trust that he will be cut off before he succeeds in his iniquitous plans. There is a storm brewing, which will soon burst over his devoted head, and that of his haughty, but hitherto concealed, accomplice and protector, the powerful Sir Lutold of Regensberg."

Charles who had exhibited great interest during his allusions to Altenburg, now enquired, "Is the monk a tall and muscular man, with a dark complexion, and piercing eyes?"

"The same," answered the wounded man; "and if you have any secrets, he will certainly read them. I recommend you not to offend him, or even excite his sus-

picion, for he never forgives, and is not over solicitous of the means he employs to carry his wishes into execution.”

“Is the person,” asked Hugo, “whom you mentioned, as being well acquainted with Bertoldo, confident that he was at the fall of Altenburg?”

“Take my word for it, that not only the monk, but the proud and specious Sir Lutold were both present; and moreover the blood of Sir William is on the dagger of the Count. And as your men, Sir Squire, wear the Greiffen badge, I strongly in my dying moments, recommend you to caution your Lord to guard well his castle and his daughter, for the Count has designs against them.”

The men at arms had now prepared a litter, which they had formed of branches, and spreading grass and fern over it, attempted to place the wounded man on it; but the motion caused the blood to flow with greater violence than ever, and it became evident, from the expression of

his countenance, that the effort to remove him would be useless, as he was becoming more exhausted every instant. Hugo moistened his parched lips with water, and poured a few drops of wine into his mouth, which apparently relieved him for a few moments; when he earnestly entreated Hugo to acquaint his brother, Albert Englemann, who was a page in the service of Sir Lutold, with his cruel fate; then recommending his soul to God, advised his friendly protectors to advance as rapidly as possible, since by remaining it would only endanger their own lives, should the robbers return; and could neither be of service to him, nor prolong his existence. His voice had become very faint, and shortly after he ceased speaking: the last death rattle in his throat announced the termination of his mortal career.

The party now mounting, pushed forward after crossing the ravine, at a rapid pace, and shortly after arrived, without

meeting with any other adventure, at Leonhardt's. But how different was our worthy host's manner from his friendly conduct on a former occasion: no kind recognition—no signs of acquaintance; but as he took charge of their horses, a low whisper to be cautious and silent, and to depart as quick as possible, determined Hugo to be on his guard. On entering, they found several men drinking deeply, and engaged in loud and animated conversation; but in an instant, silence reigned in the apartment, as the inmates eyed the intruders with looks of suspicion and hostility. Presently they whispered together, and Hugo and his attendants were evidently the subject of their thoughts, as they frequently eyed them with looks of intelligence to each other. The meeting was by no means agreeable, particularly as the new comers saw large stains of blood on the garments of the drinking party. At last the man who appeared to be their leader, observed—

“ You are a bold man, Sir Squire, to travel in these dangerous woods with so slight an escort.”

Hugo, who was conscious that a bold and careless manner would best preserve them, replied, “ Men of our profession are not much troubled with fear; and gentlemen of the forest are generally civil to us soldiers, as there is little to gain from us but hard blows.”

“ Your purses may be empty,” observed the leader, “ but your horses are of some value. Have you far to go?”

“ Not more than an hour’s ride,” replied Hugo.

At this moment a tall and dark visaged monk slowly entered the apartment, with affected humility, and regarding the party said, “ Blessings on you, my children; you have well attended to the precepts of mother church—charity covereth a multitude of sins; and as you have attempted to soften the dying pangs of a poor sinner, you will obtain a sure re-

ward." But there was a sinister look of malignity, which ill accorded with his words.

Hugo replied, " That they assumed no merit for their exertions in endeavouring to save a dying man, as their christian duty enjoined them to assist a brother in severe distress ;" and turning round at the instant, Bertoldo started back in amazement, but instantly recovering his self-possession, replied—

" Well, my son, you deserve the greater merit, since it is attended with considerable danger in these parts to meddle too much in certain transactions: but did the expiring sinner make no communication regarding his affairs? as the church should immediately be made acquainted with it, since she tenderly watches over the interests of her flock, both spiritual and worldly:" and the eyes of the formidable monk, which before had apparently been fixed in humility on the ground, were now raised, and regarded with a scrutinizing

look the countenance of Hugo, as if they would read his inmost thoughts ; but he readily replied—

“ I arrived with my party at the last struggles of the expiring stranger ; but whether sinner or saint, even had I approached in time, I was not empowered as a layman to intermeddle with the province of the priest, and take his confession.”

“ My son,” replied the monk, “ you appear to be well instructed in the rights which the church so justly claims ;” and then turning suddenly to Charles, in order to obtain some more exact information, in taking him by surprise, he asked—

“ If the man had not the power of speech, what detained you so long with him ?”

“ Oh, holy confessor,” answered Charles, “ discovering some emotion under the searching glance of his eye, the poor sufferer was thirsty, and pointing with his finger to his parched lips, we

naturally gave him some wine to moisten them; and as he appeared somewhat revived, determined to make a litter and bring him to our worthy host's, that he (if possible) might receive ghostly comfort. But it is a pity, holy father, that you did not travel quicker, since you must have been near, having witnessed our efforts." A scowl passed over the face of the monk, which made Charles shudder: then addressing Hugo, in an insinuating tone, he said—

"It appears to me, Sir Squire, that you are of noble origin, for your face is familiar to me, although at this instant I cannot exactly remember the name of your father."

"Sir monk," replied Hugo carelessly, "I am indebted to you for my rank, and wish you could prove it, as it would quickly ensure my golden spurs; but, alas! if the village chronicles speak true, my father was an honest burgher."

The monk, apparently satisfied with this

last answer, made no further observation ; but giving his blessing to the party, hoped they would not meet the same fate as the poor wretch whom they (despising the danger) had assisted.

Having now finished their refreshment, Hugo and his companions mounted their horses and proceeded on their journey, determining, as soon as they had descended the steep hill, to push forward with the greatest rapidity, not much relishing the appearance of the drunken party in the hostelry, amongst whom there had been great commotion at the moment of their departure ; and Leonhardt had whispered, “ Ride for your lives ! ” Charles embraced the earliest opportunity of informing Hugo, that in the person of the sturdy monk he had discovered the never-to-be-forgotten features of the Abbot Bertoldo ; for on that fearful night on which his noble father’s castle had been assaulted, the light had glared on the dark features of the midnight assassin ; and since then

they had been indelibly impressed on his memory. "I fear, Sir Squire, that mischief is plotting around us; it behoves us indeed to be on our guard, when that terrific man is near at hand: I liked not the satirical tone, in which he imparted his wishes for our safety; and the bloody revellers seemed to have a proper understanding with the worthy Abbot, otherwise they would not have sobered their unruly tongues immediately on his entrance; but, God willing, with the aid of our strong horses, we shall escape them yet;" "and if they do overtake us," added a man at arms, "our trusty swords shall clear an escape for us."

Often as the breeze freshened, the sound of their pursuers was heard in the distance, but as their horses were jaded, there was no fear of their overtaking them. And as the country was more open, as they approached the lofty towers of Regensburg, which now appeared in sight, Hugo slackened his pace, not wishing to distress his

horses, and they soon emerged from the forest, and entered the plain, extending at the foot of the hill, on which the noble and extensive castle was situated.

Here, all the rumours of Sir Lutold's increased forces were fully confirmed, and he was himself engaged in exercising his numerous squadrons, amongst which the veteran bands of condottieri were conspicuous. They were not allowed much time to make their observations, as their approach had been noticed, and one of the Count's squires, after complimenting Hugo, demanded the purport of his visit.

"We come, Sir Squire, from the noble Knight of Greiffen, with a dispatch for the powerful Lord of these extensive domains, and demand an audience to present it."

"If you will accompany me," replied Albert, "to our generous Lord's castle, you and your party shall receive that hospitality, which is due to the followers of the worthy Sir Herman; and after you

have refreshed yourselves, the gallant Sir Lutold will be ready to receive you."

Hugo, although anxious to make his observations on the state of the castle, around which numerous bodies of men were engaged repairing the fortifications, found little opportunity of making discoveries, as his attention was entirely engaged by the incessant questions constantly proposed by his polite companion, who had been evidently ordered to watch his proceedings. On arriving at the grand square, the party dismounted, and Hugo prudently giving orders to Charles, to see that the horses were properly attended to, for he suspected that they should have to return that evening, proceeded with his brother Squire to the baronial hall, where some refreshment was served, when Albert said,—

"You return this evening, I suppose, Sir Squire, as the moon is up: if however you wish for lodging, although the castle is certainly much crowded, we will pro-

vide you; but as a soldier you will not mind indifferent quarters for one night, yet Sir Lutold will no doubt displace others, to make room for one so high in the confidence of the noble Sir Herman, his most esteemed friend."

Hugo understood the purport of these observations, and instantly replied, "Our services are required at Greiffen, and it is my intention to proceed on my return, as soon as Sir Lutold is pleased to give an answer to the dispatch with which I am charged; at another time I shall be happy to avail myself of your offer of quarters, and try your good cheer; in the mean time, can you inform me if Albert Engelmann, a page to Sir Lutold, is at present in the castle? as I have an important communication to make to him."

The Squire immediately replied, "I bear that name, and have been promoted to my present situation within the last two days."

Hugo then detailed the unhappy fate of his brother, and explained the exact spot

where his body might be found, unless his murderers had removed it; and afterwards mentioned the meeting at the hostelry. The manner of the Squire changed immediately, and thanking Hugo for his generous attempt to save his unfortunate relative, advised him to hasten his departure, and after entering the forest to take another route, which was less frequented indeed, but would be safer than the road by which they had advanced, for Bertoldo and his followers would no doubt be in readiness to intercept them, in consequence of the knowledge they had accidentally acquired of his iniquitous conduct; and as the journey would be too much for their horses, they might obtain secure quarters at the friendly Castle of Eisenberg. Hugo received the hint with proper acknowledgments, and determined to follow it, fortunately being well acquainted with that part of the forest, and hoping thus to baffle the machinations of the monk, for

he truly imagined that the sudden start of Bertoldo in the hostelry, on first viewing his countenance, arose from the great resemblance he bore to his late murdered father.

An attendant now advanced, and acquainted Hugo that Sir Lutold was ready to receive the dispatch. Accompanied by Albert, he was at once admitted into the cabinet of the Count; who after reading the letter, and making many enquiries of the health of the family, and particularly of the Lady Matilda, carelessly demanded if Sir Ernest of Grunengen frequented the castle as much as usual?

“More so than usual,” replied Hugo, “since the late occurrence at the rustic bridge.”

“What do you allude to?” eagerly demanded the Knight, “relate the particulars.”

“Have you not heard, Sir Knight, how the Lady Matilda was nearly precipitated

into the deep abyss by the breaking of the rail, and was only saved by the fortunate exertions of Sir Ernest?"

A sudden gloom momentarily clouded the lofty brow of Sir Lutold, and a suppressed exclamation of vexation escaped him, as he now rose, and thanking Hugo for his obliging communications, motioned to an attendant to conduct him out, where he was again received by Albert: and shortly after a dispatch to Sir Herman's address being presented, the horses were led to the door, when receiving the parting cup, Hugo and his party proceeded, accompanied by Albert and some men at arms, who took very good care that they did not reconnoitre the works too closely. On arriving at the verge of the forest, Albert took his leave, wishing him a safe journey, and urging him in a whisper to choose the intricate path, as Bertoldo's men were out.

As soon as they had advanced some distance, Charles informed the Squire, that

there was something wrong hatching between the Abbot and Sir Lutold, as he saw a strong body of condottieri accoutred just like the revellers at the hostelry, march into the castle, and overheard one of them say, that the other party was expected in a few days. We were closely watched, for on attempting to leave the stable yard, two or three spears were presented against us, and we soon found that we were in the lion's den, and must not pry into mysteries. One of the men at arms now stated, that he was perfectly acquainted with all the intricacies of the forest; that it would be safer to take the upper road, which was practicable at this season of the year, as that black looking fellow would probably attempt first to cut their throats, and then shrive them, if they required his good services. Hugo followed this judicious advice, trusting thus to avoid Bertoldo and his myrmidons.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SCARCELY had Hugo quitted the Castle of Regensburg, when the door of Sir Lutold's apartment slowly opened, and the lordly Abbot of Muntzberg, half priest, half soldier, entered as one privileged to appear without the ceremony of introduction. Some traces of disappointment were yet visible on his face, although he evidently struggled to assume a placid and contented air.

“Well, Sir Priest,” demanded the Knight, “have our worthy friends at Zurich succeeded better on their trading voyage by land, than they have latterly done by water.”

“Thanks to the holy saints,” replied Bertoldo, “they have been as successful

as usual, for the church has, as in duty bound, watched over their safety during their land excursion, and has guarded them with jealous care from those worldly temptations, which lead the soul to destruction."

"What then, most pious Abbot," said Sir Lutold, "assuming your clerical character, after half murdering them as a soldier, you have administered the comforts of religion to the dying sinners."

Oh no! most noble Knight, our trusty swords precluded the necessity of shriving them; but I alluded to that pernicious metal, of which we kindly took charge; that double-faced friend, the possession, and the want of which, are equally to be dreaded. Oh thou hateful dross! how oft hast thou enabled the unfeeling voluptuary to plunge unsuspecting innocence in guilt? How oft hast thou urged the famished wretch to win a miserable existence, by arming him against the life of his fellow man?"

“Thousand devils!” interrupting him, said Sir Lutold, “do you intend to treat me with a homily? you may save yourself the trouble, as your sanctified words and looks, will not pass current with me. If however you are seized, with such a holy dread, of the baneful influence of this necessary evil, you will find me ready to lighten you of the oppressive load. My followers have not such tender consciences, and are at all times prepared to incur the danger of its possession: but in sober verity, how has this weighty affair been settled?”

“After waiting,” said Bertoldo, “until the patience of half the saints in the calendar would have been exhausted, the worthy Zurichers, some twenty in number, at last appeared in sight, with their valuable cargo: we allowed them to reach the ravine in safety, and as they were crossing the stream, and ascending the opposite bank, charged them with fury: though taken by surprise, and at great disadvan-

tage, the sturdy rogues stood their ground, like good and true men, and rendered some of my honest condottieri in a fit state to confess their sins. But the greedy dogs were resolved to worry their prey, and soon laid some six of their opponents weltering in their blood: the others not relishing this hard fare, made a desperate rush, overthrew our foremost ranks, and galloped off, as if a whole legion of devils pursued them."

"I trust," said Sir Lutold, "that you supported this just character, and flew after the runaways."

"Yes, by the mass, but they were better mounted than ourselves, and made our jaded horses pant, as if they had the asthma, until at last they limped like so many weary pilgrims, crawling to some far famed shrine. The excursion, however, has still proved profitable; the six were well laden with sins no doubt, but with gold also. But what is the purport of that gay squire's visit? he had a narrow

escape, for had he made his appearance before the good merchants, my children would have saved him the trouble of coming so far: I fear he has heard enough from one of the dying men, to render my good name rather suspected: I questioned him closely, but the varlet either had nothing to impart, or is a deep one for such tender years. But does not his noble countenance appear familiar to you? have the features of the Lord of Altenburg faded from your memory? I gave an involuntary start, as he first met my gaze, but on carelessly demanding to what noble family he owed his origin, he replied with such readiness and composure, that he derived his descent from an honest burgher, that I am almost inclined to believe, that the resemblance is accidental. Yet I suspect that sly looking serf, Charles, as they named him, knows as much of that bloody affair as Sir Lutold himself."

"Or the worthy monk Bertoldo," added the knight; "but in regard to the object

of the Squire's mission, it was only complimentary; some tender enquiries regarding my health after the accident at the hunt: the fair Matilda is anxious about my safety."

"Had it not been for this game you are playing at Greiffen, and for the respectability of Leonhardt's house, master Hugo should not have escaped so easily; he had however a hard ride for it, and my brave boys may yet intercept him. But how proceeds your love affair? does the gentle Matilda acknowledge your claims? Were I the Count of Regensberg, the affair should have been arranged before this: I do not admire these temporizing measures; success never attends them."

There was a slight change in the countenance of the handsome Knight, and his voice trembled as he replied with emotion, "Bertoldo, we have not been always callous: time was, when in the freshness and happy innocence of youth, we not only practised virtue ourselves, but admired it

in others; and though time, and the nature of the scenes in which I have since been engaged, may have blunted my feelings, and steeled my heart, yet the remembrance of that happy period will occasionally steal over my senses like a dream, and compel me to feel, and acknowledge the beauty, the dignity, and the power of virtue. And who can approach Matilda without experiencing these emotions? There is a nameless grace and simplicity of manner, which dignifies her every word and action, and represses every rising thought and expression, which a long intercourse with women of a less sterling character, might otherwise engender. But who could have the inhumanity to cause pain to a mind so pure?"

"Sir Lutold, you are becoming a moralist, and are absolutely poetical; yet I suspect the broad lands, and accumulated treasures of the Heiress of Greiffen, have more real attractions for one of ruined fortunes, than even her divine charms."

“Perish the thought of filthy lucre!” cried Sir Lutold, “when Matilda is the subject. Oh that I could stifle that daring ambition of my soul, which oft in its wild career, has urged me headlong forwards to deeds, which my reason condemned. Who would not rather share tranquillity and happiness with a being so pure as Matilda, than wreck his present and future hopes in the bloody intrigues, and desperate conflicts, of our lawless life? There was a time, Bertoldo, before these murderous and violent passions reigned so despotically in your bosom, when you would have gladly exchanged your mitred crown for the gentle Evelina’s love; and since the strict laws of the church prevented your union, you never formed an idea, or expressed a wish, against her innocence and honour.”

The satirical smile which had played on the dark countenance of the monk, at the expression of virtuous feelings by Sir Lutold, passed rapidly away;—his features

assumed a look of deep melancholy ;—the unbidden tear almost started from his eye, as his head drooped on his bosom :—a considerable pause ensued, but at length with a painful effort recovering somewhat of his usual air of confidence, he slowly raised his head, and said with a mournful voice, “ I pray you, Sir Knight, let the dead rest in peace : the remembrance of those halcyon days, when our hearts first blossomed with young affection, can tend only to unnerve our minds at this important moment, which demands our utmost exertions of courage and wisdom ; and if we seize not the golden opportunity, we shall fall to rise no more. Then permit not woman’s love to interfere with our well planned designs. The feelings which once influenced my heart, I will give you credit for now experiencing ; but that which in the first fervour of youth is natural and becoming, cannot claim the same indulgence at a more advanced period of life. But you unjustly attribute designs to me,

which reason and self interest condemn: and so far from advising unworthy means, I strongly recommend you to gain Matilda's hand by fair and open attentions. Your rank, your accomplishments, and your extensive estates, (of the impoverished state of which, Sir Herman is happily ignorant), entitle you to demand the alliance of any female. But whilst I endeavour to promote your interest, and pay due regard to your feelings, I must expect the same forbearance on your part, and request that the name of Evelina may never again be mentioned."

The Count, fully aware of the vindictive spirit of his worthy associate, readily answered with well feigned regret, "Your pardon, Bertoldo: it was by no means my intention to awaken former tender remembrances; in the excited state of my own heart, the name escaped me, but we will bury the subject in oblivion; and I will at once candidly tell you my future plans in regard to Matilda, as a circum-

stance which has lately happened, renders it imperatively necessary, that the question should be brought to an immediate decision. I allude to her having been rescued from a violent death, by the interference of Sir Ernest. Such an event naturally makes a deep impression on a woman's heart, and will probably awaken her to a true knowledge of her affection for him; for hitherto, and I have observed them closely, their intercourse has been as free and unembarrassed as that of brother and sister. The youth however has certainly discovered the nature of his regard, and displayed some evident marks of jealousy, during my late visit at Greiffen and Ustar. The child was one day disappointed of his seat next his love, and was almost ready to cry for his plaything. I shall, however, have an opportunity of ascertaining the real state of the case, during the festivities of to-morrow, and will make my formal proposals to Sir Herman."

The wily monk, cautious of offending the vanity of Sir Lutold, replied, “Your rival has certainly great pretensions, but all his merits are cast into shade, when compared with your’s; yet, as you must be aware, (and few men possess more intimate acquaintance with all the secret springs of the female heart,) the lady may have already granted him the assurance of her love, particularly if he has embraced the late favourable opportunity, and urged his claims with warmth.”

“True, Bertoldo, it is possible, but the accident is quite recent, and first love is timid: I am, however, not a man to be frightened at shadows, and women are fond of martial glory, and Fame, with her hundred tongues, has not been silent in my praise. Oft at her father’s board, when war has been the subject of discourse, her enthusiastic imagination has lighted her lovely countenance into brilliancy, and she has hung in mute attention, over the recital of the glorious deeds of

her countrymen: and in all our private conversations, the subject which has most excited her interest, has ever been the romantic adventures of some gallant knight."

"But has Sir Ernest performed no action worthy of a woman's praise?"

"Several, and I willingly acknowledge and admire his high courage, but then he is young, and has not yet enjoyed the opportunity of acquiring so high a name, as those of longer experience and standing."

"I may therefore conclude Sir Knight, that you have every chance of success, since the lady's taste is so warlike; and none can boast of ever having seen the gallant Sir Lutold's back turned in flight: but should fortune in her wayward mood desert you, what ulterior projects have you formed?"

"It will be time to determine," replied the Count, "when my alliance is rejected." What other designs the Knight might entertain, in regard to his lady love, were

locked in the recess of his own breast: the Abbot dropped the subject, as some person demanded admittance: and a page announced the arrival of a benedictine monk, who had been dispatched secretly to Zurich, to obtain information of the preparations in that quarter.

A short muscular man was now introduced, who advanced with stealthy tread, and exchanged a rapid glance with his employer, which seemed to reassure him—his eyes, concealed under long shaggy brows, were usually fixed on the ground, and never boldly met the gaze of the person, with whom he was engaged in conversation; a satirical smile played round his mouth, but when he commenced speaking, the seductive tones of his voice fell sweetly on the enchanted ear.

“I have executed your commissions, most reverend Abbot, and had nearly succeeded in hearing the confessions of the leader, and original founder of the league against the Count, but an unlucky

chance defeated this desirable object: you may, however, implicitly rely on the authenticity of my information; that the levies of troops recently made, are decidedly intended for active warfare, being far beyond the numbers necessary for the protection of the city on ordinary occasions. And besides that, the men are engaged for a considerable period, provisions, money, and warlike stores are collected, and the prevailing report is, that the council intend to attack the castle of some great noble in the neighbourhood."

"You are deceived," replied Sir Lutold, "most worthy sir, your opinion is erroneous as to the object of this armament. Zurich and several other towns, having assumed great privileges during the interregnum, are anxious to obtain their confirmation, and now that the Pope has notified his determination to appoint an Emperor, in the event of the diet failing, to carry the election unanimously: they wisely consider, the formation of a nume-

rous and well appointed corps, as the best mode of obtaining their wishes, at the critical conjuncture."

The monk, with great composure, observed, "Time will show the truth; I simply detail the news, and leave those best acquainted with the springs of action, to judge what conduct to pursue."

Bertoldo remarked, that the observations of Sir Lutold carried considerable weight with them; yet, as father Francis was a man of great discernment, and slow to accept information on such points of importance, without strong corroborating facts, he thought it would be prudent to pay strict attention to the active measures of those towns, particularly as they affected to declare, that they had grievous cause of complaint on account of their plundered merchandize.

"You, my Lord Abbot," said father Francis, "well know what degree of faith is to be attached to my word; and I can positively assure the gallant Count, that

I have actually read the Manifesto, which has been secretly prepared, but not yet published, declaring war against the Lord of Regensburg, and several other chiefs, unless they submit to certain conditions; and I deeply regret, that the event which prevented me hearing the confessions of Arnold Müller, deprived me also of taking a copy of the document."

"The base and impudent serfs!" exclaimed Sir Lutold; "but they shall pay for their insolence, as I have their city in a net. This fact, Sir Monk, is indeed decisive; but it is strange that John Knoblak should be so far deceived, for I cannot imagine that he is dealing falsely with me, since I have always found him faithful, and have certainly paid him well."

The monk for an instant raised his head, and there was deep meaning in his dark eye, as he satirically remarked, "But may not his honesty be overpowered by the richer rewards of your antagonists?"

“Are you then acquainted with him,” demanded the Knight.

“I have known him for years, but have never trusted him. That he possesses talent and information is undoubted, but he is a man of no fixed principle: ready to affirm or deny, praise or censure, injure or justify: and when it can promote his interest, will betray without compunction his best friends. Such is Knoblak:—his treachery prevented me attaining the grand object of my journey, and even endangered my life: and it is a miracle that I have so well escaped to tell the tale.”

“The son of infamy shall dangle his heels in the air on the eagle tower,” said the enraged Count.

“He will never soar so high, Sir Knight,” replied the monk: “he will not venture to darken the walls of Regensburg again.”

Sir Lutold thanked, and richly rewarded father Francis for his valuable information, and requested him to retire and take re-

freshments after his great fatigues; then turning to Bertoldo, demanded his opinion on the best mode of proceeding.

Bertoldo, after some pause replied, that “A matter of such grave importance required mature consideration; but he thought it indispensable, that immediate application should be made to the nobility in the vicinity, to enter into a general league for their mutual defence, as the object of the great towns was evidently directed against the power of the feudal leaders; and many who might strongly object to some of their own proceedings, yet would gladly unite hand and heart in this cause, for the support of their own privileges and rank.”

“I am happy to say,” said Sir Lutold, “that our opinions perfectly coincide on this point, and I have already anticipated your recommendation, having dispatched couriers to the principal Knights, and now await their decision. The Count of Tock-

enberg has already signified his adhesion, and from the extent of his power, his distinguished character for bravery and conduct, numbers will be induced to follow his example : and if fortune smiles on my hopes, and the fair Matilda consents to entrust her future happiness to my care, we may bid defiance to the utmost efforts of the league, when in possession of the strong castle of Greiffen, as our advanced post."

"It will however be advisable," remarked Bertoldo, "to forward immediate information regarding the manifesto, as it will at once decide the waverers, who are a dangerous class."

"Certainly," said the Count: "but in addition to our local means, I am in daily expectation of receiving information of the near approach of my gallant friend, the Count Rinaldo, at the head of a numerous and veteran corps of free lancers. His ostensible object is to offer his services to

the league, but this pretence is merely adopted to ensure his safe arrival at Regensburg, without question or interruption."

"Why, with this accession of force," said the monk, "we may either at once assume offensive measures, or treat on equal terms for an adjustment of our differences, but our conduct will naturally be guided by that of the league."

"Yet I must still express my doubts," said Sir Lutold, "of the object of the preparations, and of their advanced state; it is more prudent however to strengthen ourselves by new alliances, and to adopt the most active measures."

Bertoldo now acquainted his friend with the strong hopes he entertained of an immediate accommodation with the Pope, and of the consequent restitution of his rich abbey, which would add a lustre to their cause, particularly if they could gain the protection of His Holiness. "In the mean time, it will be our object to endeavour to sow dissensions among the com-

bined leaders; and I will instruct father Francis on this important point; but he must return immediately to Einsidlin, in order to avoid creating suspicion.”

Bertoldo after wishing his worthy associate every success in the attainment of his wishes, both in regard to Matilda, and the more important succession to the broad lands, and strong Castle of Greiffen, bade his adieu for the night, and returned to make the necessary arrangements with the pious Benedictine, for the further prosecution of their atrocious schemes.

Hours after the Abbot had quitted the apartment, Sir Lutold still remained deeply absorbed in thought, reflecting on his present perilous situation, should the surmises of the monk prove correct, and he could not help acknowledging to himself, that Francis enjoyed the best opportunities of acquiring authentic information. Like a determined gamester, he resolved to stake his all on one desperate chance, and to gain possession of Matilda at

every hazard, as the surest mode of carrying him safely through his difficulties. Only one other means of extricating himself presented itself:—to abandon the paths of vice, and sacrifice the wily Bertoldo, and his murderous corps, to an indignant public. Brave even to a fault, he yet scarcely dared to harbour such thoughts, for he dreaded the assassin's steel:—but all would depend on the morrow.

CHAPTER XIX.

MATILDA was seated at a small table in the recess of the large window, which commanded a fine view of the Alps, towering in the distance, crowned with their eternal snows, and glowing with rich prismatic colours. Whilst occupied with her embroidery, she occasionally cast a glance on the court below, as the castle gates had been thrown open, and numerous tables groaned under the weight of huge joints of beef and venison, noble goblets filled with generous wine, and foaming beer. At intervals the harp and song resounded, and frequent shouts of joy burst from the assembled multitude.

Sir Ernest entered the saloon unobser-

ved, and stealing to the back of her chair, softly whispered in her ear;—"Why so pensive, dearest Matilda? are you reflecting on the vanity of all earthly happiness? how soon the busy crowds assembled in the vast area below, after playing their allotted parts on earth, will pass away? or are you engaged in comparing the littleness of man, with yon stupendous works of nature? how much lordly man loses in the contrast!"

"My dear Ernest," replied Matilda, "you must first teach me to philosophise:—when do you propose exchanging the sword for the pen?"

"Not immediately, dearest; the present turbulent times will prevent it, and will certainly not allow my sword to grow rusty from want of sufficient employment."

"If you should perchance take a poetical turn, I hope you will celebrate my praises in some of your inspired productions?"

“To do you justice, sweetest Matilda, were impossible; all that painters in their happiest efforts, and poets in their noblest inspirations of imagination, have conceived of ideal beauty, has never equalled the reality which exists in your lovely form; yes Matilda, (tenderly taking her hand) the hope of creating an interest in your gentle bosom, has been, ever since that dreadful moment of alarm at the bridge, my dream by day, and in the tranquil season of the night, your lovely image has floated like a guardian seraph over my couch; conscious how unworthy I am, of the love of such a pure being, yet my heart still clings to the fond but presumptuous hope, that you will in mercy bestow some portion of your regard on me.”

The blushing girl dropped her speaking eyes in bashful timidity on the ground, whilst the ardent youth, a little emboldened, encircled her delicate waist with his arm, “Say only, sweetest Matilda, that you do not absolutely hate me.”

“ Ah! dearest Ernest,” scarcely sighed in faint tones the agitated girl, “ can the preserver of my life be indifferent to me, you will ever claim a large share in my esteem, else, were I indeed an ungrateful being.”

“ Esteem, dearest, is but a cold term ; can you not find a warmer expression ?”

“ You well know, my dearest Ernest, that you have long enjoyed my sisterly affection, and lately you have in addition, justly obtained my gratitude, you are indeed unreasonable, you quarrel with esteem, with gratitude, and sisterly affection ; there is surely nothing more to demand.” Her heaving bosom, the half suppressed sigh, the tremulous motion of her lips, told that her heart was conscious of yet another term : whilst the youth gently drawing her trembling form closer, whispered, “ Is love then a stranger to you, dearest :” the sudden deep crimson, which suffused her neck, her cheeks, and her

forehead, was sufficient answer ; her head drooped gently on his shoulder. “ Then you do not absolutely hate me, my sweetest love ? ” A glance, but then such a glance, which made the young blood dance in tumultuous tides through his veins, was her only reply. With impassioned eagerness, Sir Ernest poured out his whole soul in rapture ; whilst the trembling maiden answered in soft whispers, to all his demands. An approaching step awakened them, from their sweet dream of ideal happiness, and Ernest imprinted a fervent kiss on her blushing cheek, as she hastily disengaged herself from his embrace, and hurried to hide her confusion in the bosom of her affectionate sister.

Sir Lutold, who had only been slightly hurt, soon recovered from the effects of his fall, and on his early appearance at Greiffen, was received with evident satisfaction by Sir Herman, who gratefully renewed his thanks for his gallant exer-

tions in his daughters' defence, and expressed his delight on finding that he had received no material injury in consequence.

Sir Lutold readily seized this favorable opportunity, and gallantly replied, that the trifling service was too much magnified; that he should be at all times ready to run greater hazards for the safety of one, who had long engaged his warmest affection, and that the first wish of his heart, was to unite himself by the closest ties with the lovely and accomplished daughter of a house, so distinguished as that of Greiffen, and concluded with a warm declaration of his passion, and the formal demand of the Lady Mitilda's hand.

Sir Herman expressed himself in dignified terms of the high sense of the honor, and that he would instantly acquaint his daughter with the proposal; but at the same time considered it candid to state, that the Count's hopes of success

must depend on his daughter's decision. Yet he feared her heart was already engaged.

The haughty Sir Lutold scarcely repressed his rising indignation at the cold politeness of Sir Herman's manner, suspecting from his observations of the morning, what the result would be ; but accustomed, under the specious veil of deceit, to control his violent passions whenever it tended to his own advantage, he courteously rose to depart, expressing the earnest hope that their families might yet be united in the closest bonds.

Sir Herman, deeply affected at the idea of the probable consequences of a decided rejection of the powerful Count, yet uncertain what effect his noble person, and graceful manners, might have made on the tender heart of his daughter, despite her seeming partiality for Sir Ernest, determined to be solely guided by her wishes, and instantly sought her mother's saloon.

Matilda entered with faltering step, for she was aware of Sir Lutold's interview with her father, and from his impassioned manner during the morning, shrewdly suspected the purport of his visit. Her fears were soon realized, when Sir Herman intimated the honor which the Count had done her, in laying his person and fortune at her feet.

Matilda, in deep dejection, replied, that she was fully sensible of the compliment, but that she could not willingly give her hand, unless her heart were affected ; and that another had already claimed and obtained it ; but was at the instant ready to make any sacrifice for her dear parents, by whom she had ever been treated with the tenderest affection. " I have lately become," continued the affectionate girl, " too well acquainted with Sir Lotold's private character, not to fear his vengeance. Oh ! let not ruin impend over my dear father and mother, for joy can never dwell in my bosom, if the dagger of an open enemy, or midnight assassin, be pre-

pared to shed their blood. Say then, dearest father, if he will be satisfied with my hand, I will humbly endeavour to repay his love."

Sir Herman, tenderly pressing her to his bosom, warmly declared, that he would never dishonor himself or his daughter whilst his arm retained its strength, by forcing her to give her hand, when her heart was devoted to another, who was every way worthy of such a treasure. For the Lady Ethelinda had mentioned Sir Ernest's declaration of love. A polite but positive rejection of the high honor of his alliance, was immediately forwarded to Sir Lutold, accompanied with the proper marks of regret.

In the mean time, every precaution for the safety of the castle was adopted, in consequence of the great power, and desperate character, of their formidable neighbour, whose domain embraced all that wide tract of country, extending from Zurich, along the eastern shore of the lake to the town of Rapperschwyhl. Here,

as has already been observed, he had collected a formidable band, which desolated the country far and wide; and possessed of many strong castles, and particularly of the important fortress of Regensberg, situated in the dangerous recesses of the woody mountains, he bid defiance to the single efforts of any noble, however powerful he might be.

The Count of Hapsburg had made many vain attempts to induce the chieftains in his immediate vicinity, to join him with their united forces, and endeavour by the most vigorous measures to terminate this system of depredation; but many of the minor nobles, who were suspected of listening to his proposals, had fallen victims to the unrelenting cruelty of the fierce maurauders. Such had been the art with which Sir Lutold veiled his proceedings, that he was only lately publicly known as the leader of the predatory force; yet such was his high rank and connexions with many of the ancient nobility, some of

whom were strongly suspected of sharing in the plunder, that his society, even when his conduct appeared in its true colours, was often courted, but seldom rejected. It is but justice to Sir Herman to declare, that he was not acquainted with his atrocities until the last moment.

All measures of precaution soon appeared useless, since Sir Lutold in his answer, whilst expressing his sincere regret at the failure of his hopes, declared that this circumstance would not lessen the high respect which he entertained for Sir Herman and his whole family. His outward behaviour corresponded with these sentiments; and so reserved, guarded, and delicate was his conduct on all occasions, when he happened to encounter Matilda, that her alarm gradually subsided.

The character and disposition of the Count seemed entirely altered, the good effects of which were visible in the surrounding country; few depredations, and those only of the most trifling description, were

committed, and peace and tranquillity began to reign, where feverish alarm had before prevailed; consequently the rigid discipline observed at Greiffen began to relax.

But Sir Lutold was playing a deep yet sure game, and only waiting until his unsuspecting victims were lulled into a fatal security, in order to carry his ulterior projects into successful execution: and though his retainers abstained from open and violent pillage in that part of the country which bordered on the territories of Greiffen, they were yet committing the most revolting atrocities, and exacting the most exorbitant demands, from the unfortunate merchants of the rising republic of Zurich, and the imperial towns in alliance with it: but these depredations were pursued at a remote distance, in order to preserve appearances, until obtaining his prize, he might throw away the mask with impunity.

CHAPTER XX.

DURING the long interregnum which prevailed after the death of the Emperor Frederick the Second, in the kingdom of Naples, until the accession of the Count of Hapsburg; (for William of Holland, and Richard of Cornwall, were scarcely more than nominal sovereigns;) Zurich, one of the principal cities, having risen into considerable importance, had acquired great privileges, and assumed the entire regulation of its own affairs, carrying on wars with the petty states in the neighbourhood, and forming alliances with many of the young republics.

The beneficial effects of the new form of government were soon felt, and seemed to have produced a change on the whole

face of the small territory: the rude soil which lay neglected under cruel and oppressive masters became cultivated, and many a craggy rock was clothed with vegetation, whilst the fostering hand of free and hardy labourers, changed, like the magical touch of a fairy's wand, the wild and barren heath, into a fruitful plain; but still the industrious citizens of the infant republic had many grievances to complain of, from the heavy and unprincipled exactions of the neighbouring Barons, on their rising commerce. There was no end to these vexations; and commercial speculations were nearly annihilated; for that fair profit, which the enterprising merchant had a right to expect, instead of entering into his own coffers, only went to support the pride and luxury of some noble but infamous plunderer. At length when confidence was destroyed, and despair had almost driven the unfortunate sufferers into hopeless despondency, a simple but patri-

otic citizen appeared on the scene, as the saviour of his afflicted country.

Arnold Müller had long enjoyed the admiration and esteem of his countrymen; possessing a plentiful fortune, he expended the greater part for the benefit of his native city, and courting no public situation, he only desired the title of "The Father of his country." Sensible that good morals and knowledge are inseparable, he gave encouragement to the pursuit of learning, and afforded a splendid example of it in his own person; for notwithstanding the great multiplicity of affairs in which he was engaged, he yet made great progress in literature, and his comprehensive mind would have done honour to the most enlightened period. He was a zealous friend to religion, and established a school for teaching reading and writing: his house was a model of well regulated economy, his table being plentiful but frugal: his manners were distinguished for their simplicity.

He had long viewed with indignation the course of fraud and rapine by which the property of his townsmen was assailed, and had contemplated the means of entirely suppressing this iniquitous system. Previous however to the public announcement of his plan, he employed a confidential and intelligent agent, to sound the disposition of the leaders of the neighbouring towns, to inspect their means, and ascertain the number of forces they could collect and maintain; and also to obtain information of the real strength of their oppressors, thus to enable him to judge of the probability of success: for an unlucky attempt in their present low and desponding state, would only embolden the Barons to commit greater ravages, and thus plunge his fellow citizens and allies into deeper misery.

He also employed an Italian, who had long been in his service, to assume the character of a troubadour, and thus gaining admittance to their castles, make the ne-

cessary observations on their state of defence, and of the nature of the discipline maintained amongst their troops. The information acquired by this judicious step, proved of infinite service at a more advanced period, in the subsequent severe struggle.

Although Müller's capacity enabled him thus to plan military enterprises, and his prudence and foresight taught him to adopt the wisest measures for the public security, still his natural disposition rather led him to engage in those peaceful occupations, by which the riches of all classes of the community are to be acquired; and he strenuously endeavoured to curb the warlike spirit of the citizens, and to soften that ferocious desire of rapine and bloodshed, by introducing the rich productions of Venice, and other commercial towns, and thus giving them a taste for the comforts and elegancies of life: but the overbearing and turbulent spirit of the great Barons and Knights had hitherto thrown

great obstacles in the execution of his useful measures.

Seeing, therefore, from the continued rapacity of his neighbours, that war was the only alternative, he secretly purchased large stores of arms, other warlike stores, and provisions; and having at length matured his plans, communicated them in confidence to the Landamman, who highly approving of the scheme, immediately summoned the superior Council to deliberate on this important affair. Arnold Müller opened the proceedings.

“ Lamenting the losses of my commercial friends, and the great insecurity, and, indeed, almost total failure of their late speculations, I have devoted my time, experience, and fortune, in devising some effectual remedy for these misfortunes. The object of my exertions is this, ‘ to unite all the principal towns and new republics, now rising in Switzerland, in one common alliance, of which Zurich is to be the head, for the defence of our mutual interests.

Now, as our adversaries are powerful, and in possession of many strong castles, placed on the most imposing situations, commanding also numerous bodies of retainers, it is incumbent on us to raise a considerable body of condittieri, unless our citizens come forward hand and heart in the cause of their country, which I firmly trust they will do ; and, by asserting their independence, show to the whole of Switzerland, that the seeds of liberty have not been sown in an ungrateful soil. The supplies necessary for the troops during a long and arduous campaign have already been provided, and, as regards the sinews of war, I have yet a considerable sum of ready money destined for this important enterprise, and which shall be placed under your control. It would be impolitic to conceal from you that our principal and most formidable opponent, the Count of Regensberg, has been lately reinforced by numerous bands of mercenaries ; but I trust that the native valour of our own moun-

taineers, when contending in the holy cause of freedom, will be more than a match against the exertions of mercenary courage ; and the establishment of our independence, from the successful issue of this arduous contest. Only one important consideration now remains—the choice of an experienced leader. Great would be the difficulties in coming to a wise decision on this subject, were we not all fortunately acquainted with the gallantry, high sense of honour, and military talents of Sir Rodolph of Hapsburg ; who has ever distinguished himself, even in these times of misrule and confusion, by generously protecting the freemen and citizens from the rapacious power of the nobles, and has justly acquired the confidence of the rising republics, by the prudence and judgment he has displayed in their cause. One more calculated to conduct the enterprise to a successful issue does not exist in Germany, I therefore propose him as leader of our armies, and prefect and protector of our city.”

Müller now detailed the sums of money he had advanced to the different towns, to enable them to put their troops in motion when necessary, and unfolded the various negociations he had concluded, which only wanted the sanction of his brethren.

Struck with admiration at his patriotic and disinterested conduct, the Landamman and Council unanimously hailed him as the father of his city, and fully empowered him to conclude the treaty with the gallant Count of Hapsburg. The following manifesto was then drawn up, and ordered to be sent, previous to the advance of the troops, to the Count of Regensberg and the Chiefs in alliance with him; if they refused to subscribe to the terms, active operations were immediately to commence against them:—

“ It is not our wish or intention to deprive the nobles of their properties, or their just rights; at the same time it is our duty, and firm determination, to protect our own interests and those of our

“ friends. Our object has hitherto been
“ to soften and conciliate; we have op-
“ posed equity to violence, and have never
“ attempted to repel injury by force : and
“ it must be admitted, that in the destruc-
“ tive wars which have desolated the
“ country, we have not attempted to em-
“ brace the opportunity of instigating re-
“ sentment and heightening mutual ani-
“ mosities by insidious arts, and thus weak-
“ ening the power of our oppressors; but
“ have ever displayed a constant disposi-
“ tion to remove prejudices and mitigate
“ anger between those who, though occa-
“ sionally agitated by broils, are yet allied
“ by local situation and by the dearest
“ ties of interest and family connection.

“ Many, sinking under the expenses of
“ these bloody contests, have seen the
“ splendour of their house restored by the
“ liberal and ready loans of our opulent
“ merchants; and what has been the re-
“ turn of those endeavours to conciliate
“ protection and gratitude? Unjust and

“ unrelenting violence and robbery. Our
“ convoys have been plundered and de-
“ stroyed, our relations and retainers slain,
“ our urgent appeals for redress treated
“ with contempt and fresh outrage.

“ We have now no hope of security,
“ but the capture and dismantling of those
“ castles which have encouraged and af-
“ fforded shelter to the cruel plunderers;
“ and we are resolved to expend our
“ treasure and the last drop of our blood
“ in the attainment of this just and neces-
“ sary object. If, then, the proprietors
“ will evacuate these forts, they shall re-
“ ceive ample compensation, and a free
“ passage for their wealth and retainers;
“ but if this equitable proposition be re-
“ jected, their blood must rest on their
“ own heads—if the sword be once drawn,
“ no terms will be accepted.”

CHAPTER XXI.

SIR LUTOLD had now matured his plans, and determined to obtain by force, what he had failed in securing by the ordinary mode of proceeding: he sent immediate orders to the new bands of condottieri to hasten their march, and secretly commissioned their leader, the Count Rinaldo of Chiavento, an old acquaintance, celebrated for his address and insinuating manners, to demand the usual hospitalities from Sir Herman of Greiffen, and having received an unsuspecting welcome, to carry some ulterior project into execution.

A few days previous to the final resolutions of the Landamman and Council of Zurich, the herald of Rinaldo demanded admittance at the Castle of Greiffen, in

the name of his master, and Sir Herman, after the fashion of the times, politely invited the Count and his principal officers, to partake of the hospitalities of his table, whilst the troops were liberally supplied with provisions on the low grounds, beneath the ramparts. No attempt was made to introduce more than the squire and page of each knight: but Sir Lutold's gold had paved the way for the success of an atrocious enterprise, and a small part of the garrison, including the warden, had been bribed, to admit, on a concerted signal, a chosen body of condottieri.

Gaiety prevailed at the festive board, for the Count possessing agreeable powers of conversation, related with great spirit, various anecdotes and enterprises of the free lancers, of whom he commanded a numerous corps: and threw considerable light on the intestine quarrels of that fine but unhappy country, Italy.

The guests and their entertainer were mutually pleased with each other, when

the sudden blast of a trumpet created astonishment and alarm in the minds of Sir Herman and his officers, but Rinaldo assured them, it was the Italian mode of announcing, that the night guards were mounted, and that all was quiet at the outposts. Confidence was apparently restored, when the treacherous Italian proposed, that they should drink success to the Zurich league, to which Sir Herman readily consented: but in the moment of security, whilst quaffing the generous wine, the Count stabbed him to the heart, and to make the deed doubly secure, two soldiers of the numerous band which now filled the hall, struck him on the head with their battle axes. The guests taken by surprise were easily overpowered, and the garrison was slaughtered without mercy.

In the first moment of alarm, the sisters uttering a piercing shriek, made a rapid effort to retreat from the hall; whilst their unfortunate mother stood motionless and

pale as a marble statue, and seemed bereft of sense and reason ; but when she awoke to the terrible reality, she threw herself on the bleeding and disfigured body of her murdered husband, whilst her robe was dyed in his gore. Emmeline succeeded by the assistance of Hugo in effecting her escape, with Lupold, one of the pages, and some of the retainers, to the secret passage ; but the wretched Matilda missed the proper turn in the confusion, and was immediately seized by the fierce Rinaldo, who had already secured the Lady Ethelinda as his prize. The castle was abandoned to plunder : but the Count issued strict orders to his followers to avoid firing it, lest, exciting the attention of the neighbouring chieftains, their retreat might be endangered.

It may be considered extraordinary, that Rinaldo should so readily have entered into the views of Sir Lutold, but the proposal was too well gilded, for his rapacious disposition to resist ; for his employer had merely stipulated for the lovely

Matilda, and had given up all claim to any portion of the rich treasures of Greiffen. Yet it is but justice to the Count of Regensberg to declare, that he had strictly enjoined the Italian to abstain from offering any violence to Sir Herman.

Pleased with these conditions, which promised so amply to gratify his ruling passion, Chiaveno readily consented to carry the plot into execution, but unmindful of his leader's injunctions in regard to the Baron of Greiffen, resolved on his death, as the best mode of striking terror into the minds of his adherents, and thus ensuring the success of his plot; and he selected the moment when the whole party was assembled together, as better adapted than the hour of midnight, when his victims might more easily escape in the dark, through the intricate passages of the building, with which he was perfectly unacquainted. And he appeared to have reasoned correctly, for even when the hall was blazing with light, Matilda

the chief object of the enterprise, was only prevented by the merest accident from effecting her escape, in company with her more fortunate sister. But while attending to his own interests, he did not neglect those of Sir Lutold ; and after the slaughter of the garrison, made a strict search for the Lady Matilda, when having succeeded in her capture, he collected his plunder, and assuring the ladies that they should be treated with the respect due to their rank, consigned them to the charge of some of his confidential attendants, and also to two or three of the most active of the perfidious garrison, intending agreeably with the customs of those times, to demand a noble ransom for the person of the Lady Ethelinda, who, although still retaining great personal attractions, yet was safe from insult whilst in Rinaldo's power, avarice being the ruling passion of his soul.

Hugo, the Squire of Sir Herman, who from the natural kindness of his disposition,

and the playful versatility of his mind, had become a great favourite, and had been treated by the Knight and his amiable Lady with the greatest confidence and esteem, and consequently entertained a high sense of regard for their interests; having accidentally become acquainted with the perfidy of the garrison, at the very moment of the explosion, when it was too late to apprise his Lord, instantly decided on the proper line of conduct to pursue, and joined the hostile crew, with his faithful attendant Charles, and his cousin, who having great reliance on his judgment, and affection for his person, readily complied with his wishes. His first object was, if possible, to save the ladies, and he had succeeded in his efforts to rescue Emmeline, when he was obliged to consign her to the charge of the page, and endeavour to find Matilda, but failing in this, he displayed so much activity, in conjunction with his two attendants, as to attract the personal notice and approba-

tion of Rinaldo, who, ignorant of the names or appearance of those who had been bribed, naturally concluded the two to belong to the party, and his confidence was completely gained, when Hugo discovered some of the secret treasures. To these individuals the important charge of guarding the ladies was principally confided.

It would be difficult to describe the agonized feelings of Ethelinda's mind, as she witnessed the sudden and terrible death of her beloved husband, and viewed the mangled remains of her slaughtered friends; yet when the first bitterness of the shock had passed, and she reflected on the providential escape of her youngest daughter, her maternal heart gratefully acknowledged the goodness of a protecting Providence, and she earnestly implored its protection for herself and her dear Matilda. Still even amidst this scene of disastrous woe, she felt additional pain at the supposed ingratitude of Hugo; but her

suspicious soon ceased, when he was enabled to declare the real reasons of his apparent baseness.

Dreading that his victims might sink under the shock of the bloody and tragical events of the last night, and the fears of a still more cruel fate, and thus destroy his golden dreams of a rich ransom, Rinaldo at once imparted to Ethelinda his future intentions. But what a wreck had one night of misery effected! She threw herself in abject submission at his feet, and entreated him to acquaint her with his future intentions regarding her unhappy daughter; but when the Count replied, that Sir Lutold would decide on her fate, the colourless lips, the clammy brow, and tearless, glazed eye, made even his iron heart shudder; and hastily terminating his visit, he withdrew from their presence.

Anxious to dispel that alarming calmness, and to turn her thoughts to hopes of liberty and re-union with her youngest daughter, he instantly dispatched Hugo,

who was a great proficient on the guitar, to endeavour to amuse the ladies, and gently win them to a more favourable frame of mind; and this, not from generous feelings of humanity, but from interested motives.

Hugo, to avoid suspicion, stongly objected, pleading the treacherous part he had performed, and that his presence would rather tend to irritate than soothe their affliction. To this Rinaldo replied, that his object was to withdraw her attention from the murder of her husband, which seemed ever to be present to her view, and might overthrow her reason, and endanger her life: that if Hugo could succeed in altering the current of her thoughts, her maternal feelings, and the natural love of life and liberty, would resume their influence, and lead to happy results.

With feigned reluctance, but in reality with secret joy, the emissary prepared to obey his orders: his reception was cold; a

shudder shook the weakened frame of Ethelinda, as she regarded one of the supposed participators in that atrocious deed. But the relation of the true motives of his conduct, his generous assistance in securing the escape of Emmeline and the page, and the project which he meditated, of rescuing herself and Matilda from the power of the villainous Rinaldo, soon relieved her mind from the heavy weight which was fast undermining her strength. Hugo saw his advantage, and painted in glowing terms the happiness her return would occasion to her afflicted daughter, who must at this very moment be cruelly agitated, by the imaginary loss of her mother and sister, as well as that of her father. He stated the following night was appointed for their bold attempt; and that it was necessary to strengthen both mind and body, in order to prepare for the fatigue and difficulties which they would necessarily have to encounter.

Hugo now, for the purpose of deception,

took his guitar, and played many of the touching but simple airs of his country, and as her tears happily began to flow, he arose to depart, with the promise of again visiting her on the following day, when he would impart his final instructions.

Rinaldo was impatient to know his success, and summoned him immediately to his presence, when Hugo receiving his highest commendations, was ordered to attend solely on the captives; and his personal attendance on himself was dispensed with.

The salutary tears shed a soft influence over Ethelinda's soul, and banished that calm and vacant look, which had inspired Rinaldo with such fears. She saw the necessity of firmness, and felt it her duty yet to live for her daughters' happiness; whilst the affectionate Matilda, forgetting her own sorrows, dutifully exerted herself to calm her mother's apprehensions, and soften her grief. And then, in compliance with the judicious advice of Hugo, they

partook of refreshment, and endeavoured to compose their agitated minds to sleep : so that when he presented himself in the morning, he was surprised and delighted to observe the amazing and favorable alteration which some hours of repose had produced.

The troops were put in motion, and arrived, after crossing a rustic bridge, on the opposite bank of a deep ravine, where they encamped. It was obvious that every precaution was taken against the efforts of any pursuers, as several strong parties were posted on the road, over which they had passed in their day's march ; therefore any attempt to escape in that direction, would be impracticable. To retreat by their rear, would only lead them into Sir Lutold's territories, from which every evil was to be expected. Hugo, therefore, being intimately acquainted with all the intricacies of this part of the forest, and with several places of concealment in the ravine, determined on obtaining shelter in

a rude cavern at some considerable distance from their present encampment. Having, therefore, prepared a sufficient stock of dried meats, and wine, from the plundered stores of Greiffen, he appeared at the appointed hour of twelve, to carry into execution his arduous enterprise. Fortunately his own friends had the guard over the ladies, whom he had apprised of the hour; and as their tent was pitched in the rear, and the night was dark, there was little difficulty to be apprehended in their first efforts, as he had carefully examined his route on the preceding evening; having, to avoid suspicion, taken the opposite direction in the first instance, and when concealed by the thick underwood and trees, turned into the proper route. The ladies had long been prepared, and sat trembling with intense anxiety, awaiting his arrival.







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